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REPORTAGE ON MEXICO

Here at last is a book which really explains Mexico in such a way that the people of the United States can understand their Southern neighbors.

The author describes Mexico's unique physical and geographical characteristics and shows how they have caused a perpetual struggle for land and a pressing need for outside financial aid. She reviews the long history of the exploitation of the simple, primitive natives by alien influences, from the Aztecs onward, and relates this to political conditions and the theories and practices of successive Mexican rulers—Díaz, Madero, Carranza, Obregón, Calles and Cárdenas.

The oil expropriations, the Trotsky murder, the bloody elections of 1940, and the inauguration of Camacho, and, above all, the persistent Nazi and Japanese fifth-column activities in Mexico with their serious threat to the safety of the United States are covered fully and stimulatingly, with the added interest of exclusive interviews given to the author by Vice-President Wallace, when a guest of the Mexican administration, Natalia Trotsky, President Avila Camacho, and others.

Yet in spite of these important features, this is not a book of merely ephemeral interest: it is a work of permanent value—of broad understanding, keen observation and painstaking research.

REPORTAGE ON

MEXICO

By VIRGINIA PREWETT



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New York 1941

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REPORTAGE ON MEXICO

I.

INTRODUCTION TO MEXICO

MEXICO is a country in ferment, in constant upheaval, and it has been so for a long time. The way God made the mountains and the plains and the way man has ruled them have combined to force the great majority of its inhabitants into a set and rigid frame of circumstance against which their energies of a society in formation, gathered slowly during periods of apparent apathy and acquiescence, have burst out in revolt time and time again. Progress has been slow, it has been a broken line, now seeming to go forward with a jerk, now falling back. This is necessarily so, for the obstacles that the Mexican people have had to meet and that they will have to overcome before they can establish anything like a steady forward advance are uncommonly great. They arise from factors as fundamental in the life of the country as bones are to a body and such fundamentals are not easily and quickly changed.

There is a question that I put to Mexicans, thoughtful men and women who have spent their lives in activities that should give them a special knowledge of their native land. What, I ask them, is Mexico's major problem?

The answer, sometimes expressed literally in so many words, sometimes implied in an hour-long discussion, is always essentially the same. Mexico's problem is—Mexico. It is made up of as many problems as there are aspects of life, and they are all so closely interrelated that no single one can be separated out

and given a solution independent of the others. Mexico's problem is economic, cultural, political. It touches the body, the spirit and the mind. As people in Mexico so often say, shaking their heads a little sadly, it is extremely complex.

But the various aspects of Mexico's problem can be arranged in an order of importance and the key to an understanding of the basic one, the economic, is the geography of the country. I use geography in its fullest sense; as Webster puts it, "the science of the earth and its life, especially the description of the earth, its climate and its products, its inhabitants, including man and his industries."

On the map of the Western Hemisphere, Mexico is a twisted little triangle overshadowed on the north by the great territorial extension of the United States and Canada, on the east by an enclosed sea and on the west by a vast ocean. On the south it trails away to a narrow ribbon of land leading down to the huge bulk of the South American continent. In this picture it is small and insignificant. Yet superimpose it on a map of Europe and you will see that from Piedras Negras at the United States border to Guatemala on the south is as far as from the northernmost point of Denmark to the tip of Italy's boot; that from Tijuana near the United States border on the Pacific side of the continent to the mouth of the Rio Grande on the Gulf is as far as from the northernmost tip of Scotland to a point near Vilna. Mexico has three and a half times the area that Germany had before recent conquests, and nearly four times that of the late republic of France. It is four times the size of Spain and nearly six and a half times that of Italy. Mexico, then, though it looks small on the map, is really a big country.

The first fact of Mexico's geography is its mountains. They break up over half its surface into peaks, cliffs and gorges, ter-

rain in which the cultivation of growing plants is out of the question and the exploitation of natural resources of any kind difficult if not impossible. Mountain ranges divide Mexico's length and breadth into many closed or semi-closed regions that differ greatly in climate and plant life; they are a natural barrier to the inter-regional exchange that might have, through the centuries, given the country a homogeneous population and culture. Mountains contain the ores that have been Mexico's chief source of wealth from ancient times, the precious metals that the Conquistadores came seeking, and, having found, enslaved the Indians to mine. Mountains afforded these Indians their one chance of escape from the domination of the Spanish. The tribes that preserved their liberty did so by fleeing to remote and inaccessible heights. ✓

Mexico's shape has often been compared to the cornucopia, the horn of plenty that a few, but not the many, have found it to be from time immemorial. The principal mountain ranges of the country lie on it like a carelessly drawn V that begins at the northern border and makes its angle just short of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, where the land is narrowest. The first downward stroke of the V, the Sierra Madre Occidental, enters Mexican territory from the United States near the Mexico-Arizona line; it continues on down the curve of the Pacific, drawing closer to the seacoast as it runs south. This is the highest of the ranges, rising gradually from around 9,000 feet in the north to 15,000 in the south. About two-thirds of the way down the Pacific coast, it takes the name of the Sierra Madre del Sur. This range is not so high, but it is very precipitous and broken. At the bottom of the V, it mingles with the Sierra Madre Oriental. In a fairly straight line this eastern range goes back toward the United States border, which it reaches a little to the

east of the Rio Grande's first big bend toward the south. This is a wide mountain system. It lies near the sea in the south and draws gradually inland as the stroke of the V goes upward.

Between these mountain ranges and the sea, on the outer edge of the continent-segment that Mexico is, lie the *tierras calientes*, the hot country. There is desert along the coast of the Gulf of California and, except for scattered regions, semi-arid lands all along the Pacific coast as far down as the Isthmus. On the Gulf of Mexico side, except for a section near the United States border and in the Yucatán peninsula in the far south, the climate of the coastal lands is damp and humid.

Between the eastern and western Sierra Madre mountains, enclosed within their V, are the great Mexican mesas. There are three major divisions, the *Mesa del Norte*, that is around 3,600 feet above sea level, the *Mesa del Centro*, around 7,000 and the *Mesa del Sur*, around 6,000. These approximate elevations are deceptive, however. There are valleys that dip much lower, especially in the *Mesa del Norte*, and there are mountain systems that cross the country to connect the Sierra Madre Oriental and the Sierra Madre ranges on the West Coast. A profile of the mesas shows five transversing ranges. The central tableland, enclosed by the coast ranges on the east and west and by transverse ranges on the north and south, also contains a third high north-and-southward-lying mountain system that connects the transverse ranges and divides its area into two almost equal parallelograms. Thus Mexico's high tablelands are really high mountain valleys.

Below the Isthmus, where the high line of the land dips to within 1,500 feet of sea level, mountains rise again to a mesa that stretches away westward toward and into Guatemala. The

peninsula of Yucatán, extending eastward in a sharp curve, is low country.

As you can easily understand, this crisscross of mountains, combined with the general upward tilt of the country from north to south, is bound to give Mexico many sharply divided regions where differences of altitude, latitude and rainfall result in wide differences in climate, plant life and environment for man. It is part of the difficulty of Mexico's general problem that in no aspect of the country can you find anything approaching uniformity or homogeneity. Diversity is the rule and the map of the distribution of climates shows graphically one of the most fundamental causes of this. Following the Thornthwaite system of climate classification, it is possible to divide Mexico into 33 climate-regions, spotted all over the country like a rash.

When you consider that the population of this land of many geographical divisions is divided into three major race divisions, the European, the Indian and the mixed; that the two largest of these groups, the Indian and the mixed, are further subdivided, the Indian into twenty ethnic families and the mixed into an infinity of combinations and degrees of combination of Indian and European blood, then you begin to understand Mexico's complexity.

Mexico, for all its size, has only twenty million inhabitants, and in comparison with the European nations against which we have measured its area, is sparsely populated. Spain, one-fourth as large, has as many inhabitants and Spain is rated as thinly populated among European countries. A comparison with Latin-American nations would be fairer and here the picture is not so dark, for Mexico, the third in size, is by far the most densely

populated of the larger countries. But this comparison also must be qualified, for Mexico's rate of population growth is very slow. For instance, while its population was tripling, the number of the Argentine's inhabitants increased by 25 to 1. During the same period (1820-1937) the United States' population increased in the ratio of 13.5 to 1.

There are two principal reasons for this slow rate of growth: lack of immigration and high death rate. The high death rate is contributed to by the unhealthiness of Mexico's climate in many regions; by the unhealthy conditions of mining, its first industry; by the lack of medical care for the great bulk of its population. But the basic reason is that the people are physically underdeveloped because they and their fathers before them for centuries have not had enough food. Corn and beans and chili, and not enough of that, is not a diet to make a robust people.

An economic system in which a small ruling class took the largest margin of profit that it could and sent it abroad or spent it abroad for foreign products has been the upper millstone grinding the Mexican people into semi-starvation for four centuries. The nether is that Mexico simply does not have arable land enough to feed its population adequately.

The official 1941 government statistics set the amount of arable land at 11% of the nation's total area. This has the following sub-classifications: land where rainfall is sufficient for agriculture, 8.70%; land where fruit trees can be grown, .03; land where the moisture of the earth is sufficient to support agriculture, independent of rainfall, .01; irrigated land, 1.27%. Other authorities give other figures. Professor Daniel Delgadillo, whose *Geografía Elemental de la República Mexicana* is used in Mexican schools, sets the figure for arable lands at 7%

of the national territory. Dr. Manuel Gamio, director of the Department of Demography in the Ministry of the Interior at Mexico City, in the March 1940 issue of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, gives the figure for irrigated lands at 1.5%, that for lands that have sufficient rainfall at 5.75%, a total of 6.80%. Even at the highest estimate, the amount is pitifully small. It is also unfavorably distributed, being broken up into widely separated regions.

From this circumstance has arisen the age-old struggle for the land in Mexico. Indian nations fought for possession of the area where food can best be grown, the valleys of the central mesa, for centuries before the Conquest.

Out of the Conquest, when a small number of a foreign race and civilization enslaved large numbers of the native race and civilization, there would inevitably have arisen an agrarian problem turning on control of the land even if Mexico had had large areas of rich agricultural territory. But it is the fact that the area from which the nation has to live is so small that has made the problem so acute; as Mexico's population increased, the fight for control of the land came to be a life-and-death struggle.

There has been more than one revolution going on in Mexico during the past four hundred years, but this is the revolution of the seventy per cent of Mexico's people who live by agriculture; the agrarian revolution that has, since 1910, 1917 and more especially since Lázaro Cárdenas' rise to power in 1935, held the limelight. It has as many aspects as Mexico has climates; like Mexico's mountains, once you get deep into the country, it is never out of sight.

One of the best introductions to Mexico that I know is, for Americans, the most natural one, the trip down the Pan-American Highway from Nuevo Laredo to Mexico City. Along this road, observations can be made that you will remember again and again in studying Mexico.

As you leave the little town of Nuevo Laredo behind, one of the most important facts of Mexico's geography begins to be borne in on you at once, the fact of the great desert of the north. This desert actually begins about twenty-five miles south of San Antonio, but on our side of the line the roads are fenced, you see occasional towns and farms, irrigated fields, cattle, signs of human habitation. Not so in Mexico, and as you drive deeper into the south, you gradually come to know what a desert means.

A desert means that nothing grows there but *chaparral*, and chaparral is a shoulder-high thicket of mesquite bushes, yucca, nopal, giant cactus. This is all there is, waste land rolling away on both sides of that magnificent highway (itself one of the important factors you'll want to keep in mind about Mexico). Sometimes the growth is thin and the hard-baked earth shows through. Sometimes it is thick with what looks like the accumulated dead underbrush of centuries. There are no farms, no houses; you watch in vain for a crossroad. Finally there is a building, a stark, sun-beaten little post where men in uniform stop your car and inspect the customs seals on your baggage—and you have encountered another fact that will be recalled to you often: Mexico's army is its police force.

As you drive on into the south, under a sun growing hotter, even the chaparral begins to thin, the land is utterly dry, empty, desolate. So when you come at last to a small town straggling along the highway, you are in a mood to wonder why

people ever settled there. You will be told later on that the town was once a thriving mining center, but that the mines were gradually worked out and the industry moved away. Mexico's major industry, mining, is not static; it must keep moving, continually finding new veins as the old ones fail. It is exhaustive; furthermore, it is ninety per cent foreign-owned, and you will hear both of these factors referred to often if you discuss economics and politics with Mexicans.

It seems a long way down through that almost uninhabitable region even traveling in a good car over a modern highway—yet this is the narrowest part of Mexico's northern desert. You begin to understand why the Spanish settlements, when they spread out from their first center of establishment around Mexico City, did not reach northward into that part of Nueva España that is now our West and Northwest. It would have taken a strong colonizing urge, backed by weight of numbers, to extend the colonial civilization across that desert in any strength. The Spanish did not come to Mexico in great numbers themselves and did not want immigration from other sources. I have seen the total number of Europeans who came to Mexico during the colonial period set at 250,000 by a competent historian, but this could only be an estimate, since there are no existing sources from which actual statistics could be compiled. It is well established, however, that the number of those who came was never large. Moreover, nothing was further from their minds than a colonizing purpose such as the English-speaking civilization in the New World was based on. The Spanish came to get gold and silver. In the central and south central regions they found the mineral wealth they sought and, what is more, the people to dig it out of the earth for them. Busily engaged in exploiting the riches near at hand, they did

not occupy their upper territories, those lying beyond the desert belt, in any force. Later, when our young nation began its westward expansion, English-speaking colonizers began to come in from the northeast and those territories were lost to the Mexican nation of the future.

If you stay in Mexico for long, you will gradually come to realize that the Mexican people are still very bitter about that loss and that it colors the way they feel toward the United States even now. It is a grievance that has been kept alive by subsequent frictions between the two countries; it has been turned to political account in interior politics for nearly a century; it was used by the German propaganda machine as a chief weapon of attack on the United States during the World War, and it is being used, by the propaganda machines of totalitarian powers, in an attempt to keep alive anti-American feeling in Mexico at the present time.

Our acquisition, by direct and indirect means, of half of Mexico's national territory has been an accomplished fact for so long that it may seem absurd to us that it could be a live issue in Mexico today. But it is easy to forget a conflict that you have won. This is illustrated by the way people in the North and the South differ in their feeling about the Civil War. In the North, it is ancient history; in the South—and I speak from personal knowledge—it was yesterday. So it is with Mexico. If we have forgotten the Alamo, they, you will learn definitely, have not. Their war with us was their Great War; they remember it and they remember the shelling of Vera Cruz in 1914 and the Pershing expedition against Villa in 1916 and the warships that the Harding administration sent to their coasts in 1921.

You will learn to look at American history from another

point of view in Mexico; events that have seemed of minor importance will grow in significance as they are seen to have present bearing on our relations with Mexico and, indirectly, with all of Latin America.

The desert and the mountains and the long stretches of thinly inhabited territory that you will cross before finally reaching Mexico City make graphic to the mind another circumstance that affects our relations with our southern neighbor. It shows, as no amount of mere telling could, that if our back door is to Mexico it is equally true that Mexico's back door is to us. The direct currents of influence are from Europe.

As you travel south, deeper into the country, mountains begin to show up in the distance ahead and the road climbs over the Mamulique Pass to reach the plain of Monterrey.

Monterrey is Mexico's third city in point of size. Here are shipped for smelting the ores from the northern mining country. Here also are located Mexico's steel factories and her iron foundries; here are a large brewing industry, the nation's first packing-house industry, a baking industry, important railroad shops, many industries. Monterrey is Mexico's first manufacturing city and it is called Mexico's Pittsburgh. But don't expect a second Pittsburgh. Monterrey has only 180,942 inhabitants.

You learn that Mexican cities are small. Of thirty capitals of states and territories (there are two of the latter) only three, Guadalajara in Jalisco, Monterrey in Nuevo León, and Puebla, capital of the State of Puebla, are what we would call fairly large cities. Guadalajara has 228,049, Monterrey 180,942, and Puebla 137,324. Of the other state capitals, only two have more than 100,000 population. Vera Cruz, the only city of any importance that is not a state capital, has only

74,541. The nation's one big city is, of course, the national capital, where are concentrated 1,451,616 people, according to first returns of the 1940 census.

But the importance of Mexico's cities cannot be fairly judged in terms of size in comparison with American cities or the number of their combined population as against the vastly superior number of the rural population. Cities in Mexico are the repositories of the Western civilization that the conquering Spanish introduced into the land, and the people of the cities are still the only channel through which what we call "Western progress" can reach into Mexico's national life. So don't discount the importance of Mexico's small urban population.

You have had a glimpse of a Mexican desert. Below Monterrey, you skirt the Sierra Madre Oriental range for many miles and see the citrus groves, the corn and cane, the productivity of the middle slopes. And after you cross the Tropic of Cancer, not far below the city of Victoria, you get an introduction to the Mexico of the tropics. As the highway loses altitude—it comes down to within two hundred feet of sea level at the little village of El Limón, between Victoria and Valles—you see the heavy growth of sugar cane, the flourishing banana trees, the prospering truck gardens, the luxuriant wild growth of the forests, where bright tropical birds fly about and wild orchids grow in the forks of the trees. You can also feel the dampness and the weight of the tropical air . . . and another fact crystallizes that you will want to remember.

It is that at low altitudes, where the soil is rich and there is plenty of rainfall, there is also heat and the jungle. Tropical diseases, malaria and amoebic dysentery, ancient and endemic enemies, and the terrible oncocerciasis that is yearly becoming more widespread, prevent the population from increasing.

Those who do survive there, living in a damp, enervating climate, suffering from the effects of diseases that sap energy, must, in carrying on agricultural industry, fight continually against the encroachments of the heavy wild growth of the jungle. Under such conditions, it is impossible to produce in these regions anything like the yield the land is capable of.

I have heard many plans advanced by Mexicans for the salvaging of these territories. They will trace the tropic belt on the map and draw diagrams showing the fall of the land, especially that of the slopes of the Gulf of Mexico. With proper drainage, the *tierras calientes* of Mexico's Gulf coast could be made into a region yielding a wide variety of products in quantities sufficient to supply domestic needs and provide a large surplus for exportation. Introduction of modern methods of tropical disease control—it was done in the Canal Zone—would solve the health problem.

Mexico's super-humid Gulf Coast region is at least seven hundred and fifty miles long and a hundred miles deep. With a practical-minded engineer who knows the region, I have discussed at length the cost of reclaiming even the hundredth part of this region. The figures soon grew to such astronomical proportions that even the richest government would quail; for Mexico, a poor country that would have to import technical skill and machinery, to drain even the thousandth part would call for an effort far out of proportion to the returns that could be expected.

On the slopes below Victoria you saw the patches of corn and cane where the Indians cultivate their crops; in the tropical country along the highway from the Mesa of Llera to the little town of Tamazunchale, you saw an occasional thatched hut; but it is after the road starts to climb the mountain wall to the

central mesa that you get an introduction to the way a large number of Mexico's population, the mountain Indians, live. You will also begin to see on a general scale what it means to carry on, as do a large percentage of Mexico's inhabitants, a primitive way of life. Later on, in Mexico City, when you hear people talking about improving the economic condition of the Indians, you will remember what you saw in those mountains.

The first thing that struck me—and it made an unforgettable impression—was that the Mexican Indians farm slopes so steep that you wonder how a man could work there without holding onto something with one hand; you can almost believe the apocryphal story that they tie themselves on with ropes. I had my introduction to these mountains when the fields were green, and my second thought, after wondering how the cultivation of such slopes was possible, was to look for the people who cultivated them. As the highway wound upward, I began to pick out below, on the fringes of fields or on little flat places hanging over the edge of nowhere, the homes of the mountain Indians.

These Indians live in thatched huts built on the bare earth. Their home equipment is crude: a mat to sleep on, a fireplace for cooking, a few utensils. They raise corn and coffee and beans; they make a little *tequila* for their own use and charcoal to burn and some to sell. They hunt in the mountains, where there is plenty of game. They buy cheap cotton clothes at the market town and salt and oil and a few other necessities, but very few. When their crops are harvested, they sell them at ridiculously low prices to buyers who come through the mountains to buy; they cannot store crops in the mountains, they will not keep for long, it is damp and the beans and corn mold quickly. So they sell their crops in bulk and, later, during the four months of the year when they have to buy staples, they

buy back beans and corn at prices from a hundred and fifty to two hundred per cent above what they sold their crop for.

If they have a succession of good crop years and get a little surplus money, the first thing they buy is a bed.

They use two tools, the machete, the heavy broad-bladed hatchet with which they cut back the heavy vegetation that is always encroaching on their fields, and a tool with a little hoe on one end and a curved blade on the other. To plant their corn, they mound up a hill of earth with the hoe, make a hole in the mound with a fire-hardened stick and drop in the seed. This is the way they have done it for centuries.

And when you look at the steepness of those mountainsides, it is difficult to see any other way that it could be done. It might be possible to improve their methods of cultivation, and thereby their total production and their standard of living, if the mountains were terraced, as are many in Italy and south-eastern Spain; but the labor of terracing those higher, wilder, steeper Mexican mountains, even granting that there is surface soil enough to permit it, would constitute a titanic task. I have heard these mountain Indians damned as hopelessly backward and unenterprising because they cling to the slopes instead of clearing and cultivating the fertile valleys. But those valleys are narrow; the waters rush down into them from above in force. Here again, extensive and elaborate works, individual flood-control systems for each valley, would have to be constructed before cultivation would be possible.

To me, these speculations were the beginning of an understanding that Mexico's people are set in a rigid frame of circumstance that holds them to what they are; the natural conditions that they have to meet are such that their "backward" methods are more often than not the only ones that can be employed

unless a disproportionate amount of money and labor is first spent on preparing for the use of new and more efficient techniques.

You see how wild and remote Indian Mexico is as the road winds up through the mountains. The highway winds and twists, doubles back on itself, now takes a turn downhill, losing altitude, now turns upward again, snaking its way resolutely southward, in and out among the higher and higher-reaching mountains. This road took many years to build; it appears to have been literally blasted out of the rock walls of the mountainsides. It winds like a serpent, yet to imagine how many more curves and gradients it would have had if dynamite and heavy road machinery had not been used to cut across the face of cliffs and around mountain shoulders is enough to make the imagination falter. But such a speculation will be helpful when you start considering one of Mexico's most basic problems, that of communications.

Mexico has few rivers and the ones it has are either mountain torrents or tropical streams, now deep and rushing, now wide and shallow. They do not serve for navigation.

Mexico's land communications, then, are road and railroad. The cost per mile of constructing these in Mexico is high in the first place because the road beds have to be cut out of the rock of the mountains—there are, of course, mountains between any two places of any real importance on Mexico's map—and it is expensive in the second place because so many more miles have to be built to connect any two points. The steepness of Mexico's mountains makes anything even faintly resembling a direct route out of the question.

There is a classic example of this on the railroad from Mexico City to Vera Cruz. At the little station of Alta Luz, on the

edge of the plateau, Indians offer you fruit for sale. The train leaves the station and winds a slow descent down the mountain-side. At the second stop, the same Indians offer you fruit for sale. They have come down from above by a mountain trail and they have been waiting at the lower station, Maltrata, for quite some time.

On the Pan-American Highway climbing up to the tableland, you will notice another detail that will tell you something important about Mexico. It is the system of interior fortifications, little blockhouses, new and white-gleaming structures with businesslike slits in their walls, that have been built along the highway at strategic points about fifteen kilometers apart. Mexico has no neighbor on the north that threatens her. Why were those forts built?

When I first saw them the Avila Camacho-Almazán presidential race was at its hottest and the rumor was that Almazán, who had been zone commander at Monterrey for years and was known to have strength in the army, would set up his own capital at Monterrey if he lost the election. If there were forts to be built during election year, I suppose the highway from Monterrey was a very good place to build them.

And the army, in spite of protestations to the contrary, is still in politics in Mexico.

When you finally come over the mountain rim and the highway levels off on the highland plateau, you still have a long way to travel before reaching Mexico City. But you have reached the tableland where, as you have heard and read so many times, "by far the greater part of Mexico's population live."

This is the only part of Mexico where climatic conditions are favorable to human life, this high mesa where the air is thin and it is very hot in the brilliant sun and very cool in the shade.

The Mexican peon's dress, the wide-brimmed straw hat, the thin pajama-like suit and the wool blanket thrown over one shoulder has a functional fitness that you will come to appreciate later when you have been deceived by the heat of the day into leaving your coat at home.

Here, on this plateau, you have been told and have read, is the breadbasket of Mexico. But if you expect to see waving fields of corn and wheat such as you see on the great central and western plains of our country, you will be disappointed. The secret is out: the breadbasket of Mexico is not, except in spots, a rich and fertile region. The great Valley of Mexico, where fifteen per cent of the nation's population live, is semi-arid. The soil is poor, basically volcanic ash, and there is no source of water for an extensive irrigation system. There are mountains all around, but except for the decorative pair, Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl, near Mexico City, none of them has a permanent snowcap that could send down streams into the valley.

In the advanced geography that is taught in the Mexican schools there appears the following apologia for Mexican agriculture:

"Agriculture is not highly developed due to:

1. The lack of an extensive railroad system for rapid and easy communications.
2. The fact that, except in a very few places, scientific methods and modern machinery are not used.
3. The lack of works of irrigation in regions where rain is scarce and of works of drainage where water is too abundant."

Mexico's agrarian problem, then, involves a great deal more than simple redistribution of the land, although its rural masses and many of Mexico's sincerest leaders have long been

convinced that this is the first necessary step. Mexico's national economic problem as a whole goes far beyond the agrarian problem; it involves questions turning on the ownership, development and control of other national resources, of the manufacturing, the public service and the extractive industries. Questions of such a large order are necessarily matters of management on a national scale, that is, of government, and to understand the situation of the Mexican people today it is necessary to have some idea of the way their government has been dealing with these problems.

Background is everything in Mexico, they say, and especially is this true of politics. Background leads us easily into history and history in Mexico is, for a person who has a genuine sympathy for the Mexican people, a subject that, while it brings understanding, certainly brings no joy.

II

THE MEXICAN STORY, 1519-1910

MEXICAN history has a pattern that is repeated over and over and in order to pick up the outline of it you have to go back well over a thousand years to the personality of a man who had an idea that was different. It was his belief that peace is good and that justice and kindness should rule in human affairs. He thought that cruelty, oppression and war were wrong; he thought that it was better for man to till his plot of soil and thread his loom and improve his lot by his own industry rather than by reaching out to take what he needed by force.

This man was a priest and he spread his doctrine among his Indian people; not only did he preach to them, but he worked among them. He taught them new crafts. He found better ways for them to perform the old tasks; he showed them how to improve their lot by industry rather than by violence and theft.

This man's idea came so near the aspirations of the Indian people that they made him a god. Of all the priests and teachers who have lived in their antiquity, he is the one they remember best. They even know exactly how he looked.

He was tall and bearded and he was white. He had many names. The Mayas called him Kukulcan; the Aztecs Quetzalcoatl.

This god of peace and progress was driven away from the cities of the plateau by a god of cruelty and war and human

sacrifice. He went to the lowland cities and civilizations, preaching his doctrine; the oppressed heard him, but in the end he was always driven out by those in power. But wherever he went, he left a promise, that he would return some day and usher in an era of peace and plenty. He sailed away from the land in a boat, promising to return by sea.

It is one of the most curious coincidences of history that the date set by the prophecy for the return of the god coincided almost exactly with the arrival of Cortes and the Spaniards on Mexican shores. As it turned out, it was also one of the major ironies in a history beset by tragic irony.

In 1519, the Indian nations were in need of a redeemer. The Aztecs of the central plateau had imposed a tyranny of the sword over the surrounding nations. Warriors and priests ruled among the Aztecs. There was an artisan class, but the masses were rural. In family groups, they tilled their plots of ground in the common holding, the "*calpulli*" that you hear so much about in Mexico. There were slaves, in the cities, in the country, in the mines; a man could sell himself into slavery. The warriors waged wars for victims for sacrifice; the priests had great temples built in which to sacrifice them. Both castes exploited the masses of the people.

At first, Cortes fell into the role set for him and was accepted, even by the rulers, as Quetzalcoatl. But soon enough he dropped the mask; he had come for gold, and he did not stand on ceremony in his manner of getting it. In the first military rebellion of Mexico's written history, the Aztec warriors rose against him. The Spanish, who had established themselves in a royal palace at Montezuma's capital, had to fight their way out. They crossed the last gap in the causeway that led from the island city to the mainland over the bodies of their own men.

When they returned later with Indian allies who had felt the oppression of the Aztecs, it was to destroy the city and the upper castes.

To the Indians of Mexico, the Conquest meant, not the return of Quetzalcoatl for whom they longed, but the coming of a new and more callous set of masters. This disappointment was to occur again, as you will see.

These new rulers were interested in one thing only: precious metals. They shipped away all the mined gold and silver they could lay hands on and then they turned their attention to the mines. They began to spread out, first to the southwest, then to the southeast, then to the northwest, through Mexico's mountains. The *encomenderos* were given title to vast extensions of land and to the people on it, on condition of converting them to Christianity. The priests came from Spain; the Indians were baptized and put to work in the mines. They were slaves and it was slavery without paternalism. How the Indians lived the Spaniard did not care; there were plenty of them, there were always others to take the place of those who died. If you remember, this is substantially the attitude that was charged against the foreign oil companies, at the time of expropriations, in 1938. That is why they say things never change in Mexico.

Following the Conquest, hundreds of thousands of Indians died. Smallpox, brought by the Spanish, decimated them. Harsh treatment in the mines and fields took heavy toll among those who came under the Spaniards' rule and in the constant warfare with those who resisted, the Spanish, with their firearms, inflicted heavy casualties. The Indians who escaped this domination did so by fleeing to desert, mountain fastness or jungle.

The colonial regime was developed with a legal and social system intended to keep the native population in subjugation

to the Spanish in the New World and these, in turn, in the strict control of Spain.

The Spanish from Spain held the important offices in government, Church and army. They came out to Mexico, acquired wealth and returned home. If they brought Spanish wives and settled permanently in the country, their descendants were *criollos*. These Mexican Spanish soon came to be a class larger numerically than the Spanish from Spain, but they were permitted little direct share in government. They evolved into the land-owning class, aristocrats of the New World, but still inferior to the Spanish in the social scheme.

Spaniard and Indian produced the third group, the mixed bloods.

It is important to remember about Mexico that the *mestizos* were at first outcasts from both of their parent races. They were born free, but there was no place for them in the economy of the free Indians, based as it was on the close circle of the kinship group. The Indians rejected them; the Spanish and *criollos* looked down on them. As their number grew, they gravitated to the towns and cities, became the artisans and small merchants. The Church took an interest in them and established schools where they were educated. They were permitted to become priests, though they could not, of course, hold the higher offices. In the face of legal and social handicaps, slowly they fought their way up. The Mexican Indians, except for the Yaquis and the savage tribes of the north, are a pacific people. The *mestizo's* heritage makes him a natural revolutionary.

During the colonial period, the Spaniards and the *criollos* exploited the Indians and the *mestizos* without mercy. This is one of the best-known facts of Mexican history; it is also a key

to the psychology of the Mexican nation that is forming today. To the *mestizos* and the Indians, this exploitation, based on the colonial army, was foreign exploitation.

The Spanish kings from time to time attempted to check abuse of the Indians by decreeing laws for their protection, but these provisions were seldom put into effect. Government officials who came to Mexico were not interested in the administration of justice; they came to get rich. To do this, they instituted their own system of exploitation that touched *criollo*, *mestizo* and Indian alike. Sale of office, sale of justice, sale of government concessions, direct and indirect theft of revenues . . . the list of crimes that can be charged against the colonial administration is as inclusive as the most complete definition of corrupt government. For three hundred years, Mexico's government was part and parcel of one of the rottenest political systems the modern world has known, that of the Spanish Empire, and the tradition is deeply set.

Under this empire's colonial policy, Mexico could sell only to Spain; its imports came only from there. Spain was not a manufacturing nation; in order to re-sell at the indicated fat profit, the Spanish bought at prices as low as they could be forced. The manufactured articles that they purchased in the other European countries to re-sell to their colonists very naturally reached the New World with prices skyrocketed. Mexico was not allowed to develop industries that might make her independent of the "mother" country. There was little attempt to develop any of its natural resources except the mines, and in this development, the capital employed was small, it was done mainly through the exploitation of the slave labor.

All during the colonial period wealth poured out of Mexico. The profits from the Spanish-owned lands and mines went di-

rectly to Spain. The profits from the *criollo*-owned properties were sent in payment for all the things that a high and refined civilization uses. The only national wealth that was stored up for the future was accumulated almost accidentally: the treasures of the churches and the many church buildings that are now attractions for Mexico's lucrative tourist trade.

1810 saw the first revolt against Spain's grip on Mexico. A *criollo* priest, Miguel Hidalgo, who believed in equality and justice and who, like Quetzalcoatl, tried to ease the Indians' burden by teaching them new agricultural methods and new crafts, launched the movement and led it in the field. He and other liberals led an Indian revolt, expressly against bad government and for return of the land. Spaniard and *criollo* combined to crush it; Hidalgo was defeated and shot in 1811. The priest Morelos caught up his standard as it fell; he was defeated and shot. Vicente Guerrero carried on the fight, in the southern mountains.

In the meanwhile, in Spain itself there had grown up out of the upheavals of the Napoleonic era a strong popular current in favor of reform of government. The Spanish Constitution of 1812, abolishing the Inquisition and making certain civil offices elective, alarmed the Spaniards and the churchmen in Mexico. They breathed easier when Ferdinand VII nullified this constitution, but when, a little later, threat of revolution in Spain forced him to reëstablish it, they changed their minds on the whole question of loyalty to Spain. Independence now seemed the lesser of two evils.

Iturbide was their military man. He had a small command in the colonial army and he succeeded in persuading Guerrero, still in arms, to join him in a movement to break with Spain. Guerrero made Iturbide's eventual success possible.

Mexico's Independence was the second outstanding irony of a national history beset by paradox and irony. It was a signal victory for the reaction, made possible by the first and most spontaneous of the Revolutions, the revolution for good government—justice—and land. The men who followed Hidalgo and Morelos and Guerrero fought for ten years and won . . . a change of masters. The Indians were made legally free; economically, there was no improvement in their lot.

The first effect of this Independence was to release the Spaniards from all restraint in their plundering. But the *criollos*, who had resentment long stored up, now saw their chance to eliminate the Spanish. These soon saw their danger, and fought back and intrigued, but without the power of the Spanish government to sustain them, they were lost. When they were finally expelled in 1827, they had a partial revenge: they took with them, when they left, capitals so large that the finances of the country were severely affected.

Freed of *their* masters, the creoles now had no restraint on their enjoyment of the rich spoils of office.

They divided into factions to fight for power. Two major groups gradually formed within the framework of Masonic organizations. The Scottish Rite Masons were the conservatives; the York Rite, the anti-conservatives, with a sprinkling of genuine liberals. A constitution had been set up in 1824, another in 1836, but constitutional government was not. When one side won an election, the other side revolted. The presidency changed hands frequently; at times there were two more or less constitutional presidents.

Under such conditions, Mexico's debut as a sovereign nation could scarcely have been brilliant. One of the first acts of the young nation was to contract an exterior debt by borrowing, at

an exorbitant rate of interest, from English banking houses. In 1836 Texas revolted and seceded. In 1838, trouble with France arose over nonpayment of damages arising out of civil disturbances, and Vera Cruz, the city that always gets shelled when Mexico has quarrels abroad, was shelled by a French fleet. Nonpayment of damages to American citizens in Mexico led to friction with the United States and our annexation of Texas was followed by armed clashes and war. Mexico lost the war and half her national territory. Santa Ana sold us another large piece (the Gadsden purchase) for ten million dollars.

Santa Ana, the conservatives' military leader, was either in power or plotting to seize power, from Iturbide's time till 1855. He was thoroughly incompetent; he was even unlucky. He did a great deal of damage to his country and gained little for his backers. His only talent was a charming personality and a genius for intrigue, but apparently that was all he needed.

Out of the chaos a genuine liberal movement slowly took form and gained strength, in the face of stubborn opposition from the landowners and the Church. Economically, these two were the same class, for by gift and inheritance the Church had acquired from one-third to one-half of all the land.

In 1857 the liberals were able to force adoption of a new constitution establishing a federal form of government and separating Church and State. It was bitterly opposed; the conservatives, in their turn, forced Comonfort, under whom it was established, to resign—with unforeseen effect.

Benito Juárez, a full-blooded Indian, called the greatest democrat that Mexico has ever known, was at that time president of the Supreme Court of Justice and, under the laws of the constitution, automatically became president. He was far more truly a liberal than his predecessor Comonfort.

Juárez stands out like a beacon in Mexican history because he was completely honest. It was remarkable enough that he himself did not profit from his position of power; but what was till then unheard of in Mexican politics and has not been seen since was that none of his friends, relatives or political supporters grew rich. It is proof of the sincerity of the liberal elements who followed Juárez for fifteen years that he held them entirely by the strength of the idea of the Reform.

This movement was a revolution of the middle class against chaotic government and monopoly of the land, a continuation of the revolution of Hidalgo. It was begun as a reform of law, but it soon had to defend itself against military counterrevolution. Juárez was successful in the Three Years' War, from 1857 till 1860, because his government, which had been recognized by our own, was able to get arms and money from the United States. This also tipped the scale against the French invasion, when conservative forces assisted in the establishment of Maximilian's puppet empire. Juárez, the lawgiver, spent most of the years of his presidency in the field fighting against reaction.

Juárez died in office in 1872, his dream of reorganizing the government as a working democracy not accomplished.

The laws of the Reform had a principal object: to break up land concentration, and the main point of attack was the entailed lands of the Church. Under the *Leyes de Desamortización* the occupants of properties owned by the Church were permitted to buy them at a price determined by the amount of rent they were paying. If the tenants did not express an intention to buy within a set time, anybody could "denounce" the property and purchase it.

This law, in effect, accomplished only part of its purpose,

that of taking the Church properties out of mortmain. The tenants benefited little. Few had capital to buy with; others were restrained by the Church's threat of excommunication. The total effect of the law was the unexpected one of opening the way for the formation of a new class of capitalists in Mexico, the foreign landholders. American and English flocked in to buy the Church lands.

Mexico's great Reform movement, like its Independence, was a story of taking one step forward and sliding back two. The *Leyes de Desamortización* not only failed to break up large concentrations of land, they also had a disastrous effect on the small holdings. The laws affected all civil corporations; the Indian villages came under this category. Thus it was necessary to divide the village lands, formerly held in common and not susceptible of sale, into individual parcels of private property, distributed among the family heads. The Indians immediately began to sell or to be cheated out of their holdings. Land concentration, instead of being checked, was encouraged.

If Juárez' actual achievements were few and soon nullified, his place in Mexican history is still a great one. He was not Quetzalcoatl; he was brown, an Indian, and his methods in government and in war were the drastic methods of his time. But he did set an example of probity and he left an ideal for the Mexican people, that of integrity in office.

It is a sort of promise, a hope; though when you look at their subsequent history, it seems a forlorn one.

Juárez' character stood between the Reform, the middle-class revolution *manquée*, and the attacks of reaction for fifteen years. He was scarcely dead when this movement, for which he had fought so tenaciously, was smothered out as the Indian revolution of the Independence had been smothered out.

Porfirio Díaz, who had been a distinguished military captain in the Three Years' War and against the French, came into political prominence in the last presidential campaign of Juárez' career. Against Lerdo de Tejada, Juárez' successor who continued his policies (including that of having himself re-elected), Díaz led a rebellion, a successful one, under the liberal banner of "constitutional government and non-reëlection."

His recognition as president by the Mexican Congress on May 2, 1877, was the beginning of a thirty-four-year period during which constitutional government was the merest sham and there was only one break in the line of his continual re-election.

Two pictures of the Díaz regime can be presented. Here is one of them:

When Díaz came to power, Mexico had been torn by civil and military strife for sixty-seven years (1810-1877). During this period, while other nations of the continent were growing in population and rapidly developing their resources and thus multiplying their national wealth, Mexico stood still—or went backward.

The first thing that Díaz did was to establish order and civil peace. From a land where banditry and theft, murder, rapine and revolution were the rule, he converted Mexico into a nation where the traveler was safe and, as Mexicans themselves will tell you today, the people in the cities left their front doors unlocked at night.

Furthermore, he invited into the country what it needed most and had least of: capital and the technical direction to develop national resources.

Railroads, a crying need of the Mexican nation, were built; mining was extended far and wide; industries multiplied; land

values skyrocketed. Gruening, in *Mexico and Its Heritage*, quotes one of Díaz' official biographers:

"Díaz increased the national income from \$19,776,638 to nearly \$100,000,000 . . . He octupled the imports and quintupled the exports of Mexico. He increased the miles of railway from 400 to 15,000 . . . Harbor work was performed at Tampico, Vera Cruz, Coatzacoalcos and Manzanillo. . . . 146 cotton mills employ 32,229 persons . . . sugar refineries yield about 127,000 tons of refined sugar—to say nothing of jute and silk industries, the woolen mills, iron works, smelters, paper mills, soap factories, breweries, meat packing works and other manufacturing establishments. Gold and silver mining increased from \$25,000,000 to \$160,000,000. . . . Mexico could borrow all the money it wanted at 4%."

An era of peace and plenty, industry, prosperity and progress had been ushered in—on the face of it.

But Díaz was not Quetzalcoatl. Here is the other side of the story.

He began his pacification of the country by arranging the assassination or imprisonment of his chief political opponents. From revolutionary irregulars and ex-bandits he recruited his *Rurales*, the mounted police who, in imposing order, left a record for mercilessness, callousness and cruelty that stands today against that of the Conquistadores. Legal forms were dispensed with; criminals or those accused of crime or those suspected of crime were stood up against a wall and shot. If no criminal or likely suspect could be found, somebody would be shot anyhow, *pour encourager les autres*.

The foreign capitalists who built railroads, opened mines and developed industry took their profits out of the country. Mexico's wealth went abroad, as it had in colonial times. Wages were low, the living conditions of the workers, especially in the

new industrial centers, were appalling. The railway system, boast of the regime, was not planned to meet national necessities; it was built exclusively to serve the mining industry. No highways were built. There was no social legislation, no attempt to extend education to the people.

The concentration of land increased, especially in the hands of foreigners. Foreign land companies, under a law passed in 1883, were commissioned to survey public lands and fix boundaries, receiving in payment one-third of the land surveyed. In 1894, land titles were examined and it was made possible to "denounce" lands with defective titles or without titles registered. The Indian villages that had so far held onto their lands had no registered titles to show and they lost their commons. This was the final destruction of the *ejido*, the common holding. The Indians, their lands gone, were forced to seek work as peons on the large estates. These could not absorb them all. The masses of the people sank into poverty, misery, want.

Díaz was absolute dictator. The Congress was his bidden creature. The judiciary was subservient to his will or that of his supporting cliques, the army, the Church, the landowners, native and foreign, and foreign capitalists. Bribery, theft, sale of favors, sale of justice, legal blackmail, all the crimes of the colonial period were found in the administration of government. Its outward form of a constitutional democracy was maintained by open manipulation of elections. The opposition dared not lift its head. The newspapers that Díaz could not suborn were suppressed; newspaper men who did not serve the dictator's interests were imprisoned or shot. The *ley fuga* was the law of the land. Soldiers or *Rurales* would arrest a man on a charge, start to jail with him; on the way he would "try to escape" and be shot.

The first picture of the Díaz regime is the one the world saw; the second sums up the situation as it was seen and felt by the Mexican people. Their condition in 1910 was actually no better than it had been during the latter years of the colonial regime. The poor and ignorant were worse off than they had been when Cortes landed. All that Western civilization had brought them in three hundred and ninety-one years was the horse, the gun, the ox-drawn plow, a number of new diseases and a new strain of blood that introduced an element of temperamental instability into the psychology of all who had it.

But if Hidalgo, Morelos, Guerrero and Juárez had failed, democracies were flourishing in the United States and France and their example kept alive hope and the liberal tradition in Mexico. "President" Díaz, his dictatorship working smoothly, made the mistake of underrating the potential strength of this movement that his policy of repression had for so long kept politically ineffective.

In 1908, with a presidential election approaching, he announced his intention to retire from the presidency and an earnest desire that the Mexican people should choose his successor in a free and democratic election.

Various reasons have been advanced to explain why Díaz did this. It has been said that he wanted to "try out" his entourage; that the statement was intended for foreign consumption only. This latter seems the most likely explanation; he made it in an interview published in an American magazine and refused to discuss the subject further in the Mexican press. A magnificent celebration of the centenary of Mexican Independence was to be held in 1910; the eyes of the world were to be focused on Mexico where Díaz the "pacifier," the arch-friend of prosperity

and progress, was to be the hero of the occasion. It was a magnificent gesture, it put the finishing touch on the picture that the world saw: not only had Díaz' "paternalistic" dictatorship carried the Mexican people far along the road to material prosperity with its railroads and factories and new mines, it had also served as a schooling, an education now completed, for democracy.

The Mexican people always want an improvement, something better, so desperately that they will clutch at any hope. At first they could scarcely believe Díaz, but when they got over their amazement, they took him at his word, and the opposition that he had expressed a desire to see come into being as a "proof of Mexico's ability to develop a true democracy" developed with a vengeance. It found a candidate, a man of the landowning class, son of a wealthy family of the border state of Coahuila, Francisco I. Madero, Jr. He was not a politician; he had attracted the attention of liberal sentiment by publishing a book, *The Presidential Succession*, in which he criticized Díaz for his continued tenure of the presidency.

Madero toured the country on a speaking campaign and his vigorous attacks on the regime aroused popular enthusiasm wherever he went. Díaz had changed his mind about retiring, but this did not stop Madero.

When the time of the election came, the government machine used their accustomed strong-armed methods to re-elect the old Dictator. Oppressive measures were used to stamp out the opposition that Díaz himself had called into being. Madero was imprisoned.

He escaped, crossed the border into the United States and proclaimed himself Provisional President. When he returned,

on February 14, 1911, the Mexican people, wearied of a long oppression and above all outraged by a flagrant betrayal, rose in arms to support him.

All over the nation the Madero standard was raised. The dictatorship crumbled; the movement that was to raise hope for the realization of all the aspirations of the Independence and the Reform, that was in time to go further and offer to Mexico's millions hope of something like a Reconquest, the undoing of all the harm that Cortes' coming had done—this movement that has been the main factor in Mexico's history for thirty years and may be for thirty years more, the Mexican Revolution, was born.

III

MEN OF THE REVOLUTION, 1910-1924

HISTORY is always topical in Mexico; during the 1940 post-election period when the government and the *avila-camachistas* had armed guards living in the Chamber of Deputies as protection against an expected armed assault from the *almazanistas*, the disputed election and the expected revolution were swept out of editorial comment in Mexico's leading newspapers by something more sensational: the suggestion that Cortes' name be added to the long list of the nation's heroes inscribed in letters of gold on the walls of the Chamber of Deputies. Avila Camacho and Almazán were forgotten as the argument raged.

✓ In Mexico, people do their political thinking, as they take political action, in terms of leaders. As I have read Mexican history, the figures of the older ones, the men who dominated from Independence till the Revolution, seem to run something like this: HIDALGO, MORELOS, GUERRERO, Iturbide, Santa Ana, JUÁREZ, Díaz. After Díaz, the stature of the leaders seems to shrink, perhaps because we are nearer to them in time, perhaps because, after 1910, the many in Mexico begin to be seen in the drama, no longer are they merely figures of the tragedy that takes place off-stage. So, from reading, the list seems to run: Madero, Huerta, Carranza, Obregón, Calles, Cárdenas.

Since living in Mexico, I have revised my idea of the impor-

tance of these men and I shall venture the mild prophecy that, as time goes on, the list will come nearer and nearer to reading MADERO, Huerta, Carranza, Obregón, Calles, Cárdenas.

Madero's career was brief and tremendously important to Mexico, but he is not presented in history as flashing across its skies like a comet. His personality, in a nation of strong and colorful figures, was not vivid, and historians, who are human after all, can do more for a man who is. Hidalgo had the broad, high forehead, the deep-set eyes, the hollow cheeks of the Spanish mystic and apostle; Morelos had a broad forehead, piercing eyes under heavy brows, strong, heavy nose, wide, well-chiseled mouth and square chin, the face of a man of action who is still a little fanatical; Juárez, the Indian, revealed in his physical appearance the characteristics of his personality: the forehead rather narrow and low, the eyes deep-set, the straight nose—in Juárez' face the accent was on the firmness of the mouth, the set, heavy jaw that we are accustomed to associate with determination, strength of will, tenacity. These qualities he most certainly had.

But Madero fell far short of looking his part. A portrait made when he was president shows a rounded forehead to which a receding hairline lends height but no dignity, puzzled eyes with a little frown of perplexity between them, rounded, broad-based nose—he was almost *chato*, snub-nosed—and a luxuriant imperial concealing chin and jaw. His appearance was anything but that of a revolutionary. If his eyes had been shrewd, he would have looked like a French provincial banker. He was only five feet two. Even Díaz did not take him seriously until it was too late.

↓ Madero's political idea was simple; his plan, essentially that of Juárez, was to institute a regime of democratic government

in Mexico and he thought the problem could best be approached by putting into effect the constitution that the country already had. The first step—and it seems a logical one—was to stop the process by which this constitutional government was made into a dictatorship, that of returning the same men to power again and again through controlled elections. His *sufragio efectivo, no reelección*—real suffrage, no re-election—may have been idealistic and impractical as a general principle on which to base a program of government in his country, but it was a very practical and effective platform on which to conduct a campaign against Díaz. It was this formula that drew to Madero the support of all the dissatisfied elements, including many within Díaz' own following who would have been quick to oppose any more radical program of reform.

Not only was Madero's political idea the best one on which a campaign against the dictatorship could have been based, but he was also the only man of his time who had the courage to undertake such a campaign. There were many who would have liked to, even among Díaz' own political machine, but they dared not. General Bernardo Reyes, who as Secretary of War had had an opportunity to build a strong following within the army, was afraid to challenge the old dictator. On the eve of the 1910 election, he was given a mission abroad that had no other purpose than to get him out of the country, and though he knew it was an intentional banishment, he meekly went.

Those who see Mexican history only in the light of the agrarian revolution charge that Madero contributed little to this reform. The fact is that while the situation of the agricultural population was desperate during the last years of the dictatorship and hungry Indians had begun to take to a sort of revolutionary banditry in the state of Morelos where the sugar indus-

try was in a severe depression due to a reorientation of the American market toward Cuba, the "agrarian movement" proper did not crystallize and find direction until after Madero's destruction of the dictatorship had removed its restraints to free speech and free political activities.

Furthermore, though he was in the presidency a little more than a year, during that time definite steps were taken toward solving the land problem. The first one was creation of a National Agrarian Commission to study it. This commission formulated a program that reads as well as any of the many subsequent ones, including the First and Second Six-Year Plans. It spoke of improving methods of cultivation, extending systems of irrigation, building roads, conserving the forests, and returning the Indian villages their communal lands. It also advanced a plan for breaking up the *latifundia* into small farms to be sold on a long-term payment plan financed by the government. An Agrarian Executive Committee was set up and given legal authority to put this plan into execution.

It was too conservative for the radical agrarian group, then forming: they charged that it was a scheme through which the landowners, selling their property at high prices, would loot the government. It was too radical for the conservatives, who saw in it the beginning of the alienation of their right to use and dispose of their properties as they saw fit.

Deserted by the agrarians and attacked by the conservatives (among them members of his own family whom he had trusted with a part in his government in spite of their former avowed hostility to his liberal ideas), Madero's democratic administration met with difficulties. In the northern state of Chihuahua, Pascual Orozco headed an uprising financed by the landowners; in the south, in Morelos, Zapata's peon army, that had come

into being at the time of the revolution, demanded land forthwith. Landowners and foreign concessionaires grouped themselves behind Felix Díaz, nephew of the old dictator, in a plot to overthrow the Revolutionary government and bring back the good old days. Madero met and overcame these threats; a second attempt found the support of the American ambassador, Henry Lane Wilson, whose influence proved decisive.

Wrote Jesús Silva Herzog, who has been one of Mexico's foremost apostles of Marxism, in an article published in 1934:

"Señor Madero did not have a real understanding of the problems of Mexico; though he was a man of good will, an advanced liberal who dreamed of the miracle of democracy. When he spoke at the city of San Luis Potosí, a short time before he was imprisoned (I was present and heard this speech), a *porfirista* asked him why he did not distribute his fortune among the poor if the good of the people mattered so much to him. Señor Madero answered—and these are his very words—"The people are not asking for bread, what they want is liberty." These words should be remembered in history because they reveal Madero's philosophy, surely a mistaken one."

Professor Herzog's final phrase sums up the attitude of those who see no hope for anything like democracy in Mexico; who look longingly toward its southern neighbor, Guatemala, where Jorge Ubico has a spick-and-span little dictatorship, where people eat well—for a Latin-American country—and where there is public peace and order, as there was in Mexico in Díaz' day. If you see in Mexico's struggles only the motive of the revolution for bread, you may agree. If you see running through Mexican history also the thread of the revolution for liberty and justice, you cannot. Today, with totalitarian governments conducting an ardent courtship of Mexico and other Latin-American countries that have similar histories and problems,

Madero's words and Madero's philosophy take on added significance.

Mexico's first Revolutionary president did not solve its century-old problems in his brief year of power. But he did accomplish something lasting; like Juárez, he set an example. He was not ambitious for personal power or personal gain. He sought to avoid bloodshed; he tried to find the middle way. He was magnanimous in his treatment of the enemies that quickly arose to attack his government and for this he stands out alone among Mexico's great leaders. He left a banner for his revolution for liberty, that of free elections, surely a step toward implanting the ideals of the "miracle of democracy." In 1936, Andrés Molina Enríquez, intellectual leader of the radical agrarians who turned on Madero and one of the severest critics of his attitude on land-distribution, wrote in "*La Revolución Agraria de México*" (Volume V, Chapter IV):

" . . . the government of Madero, in spite of Madero's personal prejudices and entirely due to his democratic creed that caused him to respect the free action of his collaborators, *should be considered the most agrarian government that we have had*; it lasted a year and if it had lasted the four of his term, the agrarian problem probably would have been solved. The great masses of the nation have always thought so and for this reason they weep at the tomb of Madero." (Italics his.)

The story of Madero's fall is one of the blackest in the long history of political intrigue and betrayal in Mexico. It plunged Mexico into a period of civil war that was to last for nearly a decade. Ambassador Wilson's part in it is one of the old scores that Mexico can—and does—charge against us.

The second *felixista* uprising against Madero began on February 9, 1913, with the traditional *cuartelazo*. Felix Díaz, Gen-

eral Reyes and two other generals, Ruiz and Mondragón, with two regiments, attempted to take the National Palace, but were repulsed by General Lauro Villar, loyal to Madero. After a precipitous retreat through the streets of Mexico City, the rebels re-formed and took possession of the Ciudadela, the government arsenal.

General Villar was wounded in the attack on the palace and Madero sent General Victoriano Huerta, a former officer in the old Díaz army who had come over to the Revolution and had commanded the successful campaign against Orozco, to dislodge the *felixistas*.

Díaz' backers, the foreign concessionaires, immediately approached Huerta—or he approached them—and for ten days, while he kept up a sham attack on the arsenal, negotiations were in progress. An agreement was made and Huerta received assurances of support in "re-establishing order" from Henry Lane Wilson, who had meanwhile been sending numerous communications to Washington telling of the weakness of Madero's government and the imminence of its fall. Wilson asked the Spanish ambassador to advise Madero to resign. This was transmitted indirectly to Madero, who refused. He instructed Huerta to arrange an armistice with the rebels, and Huerta, carrying on the farce, reported that he could not. Then he, on the pretext that *Madero* was standing in the way of the re-establishment of order, arrested the president and the vice-president, Pino Suárez. They were afterwards taken out behind the prison and shot, "trying to escape."

Under the *Pacto de la Embajada*, it was agreed between Huerta, Díaz and Wilson that the former was to assume the provisional presidency till an "election" could be held to place Díaz in the presidency.

The army and the state governors hastened to get aboard the Huerta bandwagon. Only Carranza, governor of Coahuila, who had under his command a detachment of troops and a well-organized body of *Rurales*, and Governor Maytorena of Sonora, held aloof.

Huerta, with the support of the army and the all-powerful Wilson, saw a way to dispose of the *felixistas* and become dictator himself. He permitted them to indulge in violent reprisals and then eliminated them, as he had eliminated Madero, on the pretext of re-establishing order.

Huerta was a Huichol Indian and he hated the Spanish and the creoles. Once his power was consolidated, he delighted in humiliating them in his personal dealings with them. Díaz, their white hope, he sent on a mission to Japan. In spite of opposition from Carranza in the north and Zapata in the south, he set about establishing a dictatorship on the old Díaz pattern, that is, through bloodshed, cruelty and oppression. He was in power for seventeen months, a period of anarchy and terror for Mexico.

Government in Mexico has, since the Independence, depended on an exterior as well as an interior support. Díaz' support was, interior: army, Church, Mexican landholders; exterior: English owners of government concessions, particularly mine and oil concessions, and American landowners, concession holders and industrialists. Madero attacked the dictatorship from a far wider interior base; he represented all those who were dissatisfied with the regime, that is, almost the entire Mexican people outside of a few army generals, high officials of the Church and the landowners, and he had, at first, the tacit support of Americans who were dissatisfied with the superior position of certain English companies in the matter of oil concessions.

Huerta had the army, the Church and the landholders till he eliminated the latter in the person of Felix Díaz; for exterior support he depended on the influence of the American ambassador, who used his position as representative of the American government to favor a group of American investors in Mexico.

When Woodrow Wilson, elected to the presidency of the United States in 1912, took office on March 4, 1913, this latter support fell out from under Huerta. At first, recognition was withheld. Later, American opposition was to become more positive, taking the form of active support of Carranza.

Venustiano Carranza was, like Madero, a creole, member of a family of pure Spanish blood for many generations rooted in Mexico. He too was a landowner. They say of him in Mexico that he was like a figure in an old legend. He had an imposing presence, was tall, strongly built, with a large, firmly set head. Serious, almost stern in his habitual expression, his direct gaze and flowing white beard gave him the air of a prophet, the Quetzalcoatl that he most certainly was not. He was stubborn, determined, strong-willed. If Madero allowed family feeling to influence his course, not so Carranza. When his leadership of the Constitutionalist cause was in crisis, in 1915, the *villista* Santibañez seized his brother, Jesús Carranza, and sent word that unless the *Primer Jefe* resigned, they would shoot him. Carranza refused, and his brother was shot, at the little town of San Jerónimo, now called Jesús Carranza, in the State of Oaxaca.

Carranza had enlisted in the Revolutionary cause under Madero because he believed with him that the way to cure Mexico's ills was to establish a responsible constitutional government. When he saw the government that was trying to put this into practice fall because it had to depend for support on a

mercenary and disloyal army, he formulated a plan for creating an army that should have as its chief mission the guardianship of constitutional government. It was as logical an idea as ever failed in Mexico.

His idea was announced in the "Plan of Guadalupe." It outlined a definite program. First, Huerta and his whole government, from top to bottom, legislative and judicial branches alike, were repudiated. The title of *Primer Jefe*, commander-in-chief of the Constitutionalist Army, was created for himself, Carranza, and the project of occupying the national capital with military forces was stated. Once there, the Constitutionalist state leaders were to call elections, see to it that they were free and honestly conducted and turn over their control to the successful candidates. Like Madero's plan, it was a splendid rallying point for opposition to Huerta, but also like Madero's, it was impossible to put into execution after its first object, that of overturning the dictatorship, was won.

Three corps of revolutionaries had sprung up in opposition to Huerta and these Carranza united under his leadership. Obregón and his right-hand man, Calles, led the Army of the Northwest. The revolutionary-bandit or bandit-revolutionary Villa, seconded by General Felipe Ángeles who had been the commandant of the *Colegio Militar* under Díaz and supplied Villa with military brains, had formed the Army of the North. Pablo González, no military genius but a shrewd intriguer and, for himself, good businessman, led the Army of the Northeast.

They attacked Huerta from within; the American government, already incensed over an incident involving the arrest of American sailors at Tampico, learned that a German ship was bringing arms to Huerta's aid. On April 21, 1914, the American

navy shelled Vera Cruz; marines took the city. Huerta's fall was assured.

The Constitutionalist Army broke into two factions. Villa and the formidable Army of the North wanted immediate division of the great estates into small properties, to be distributed to the landless; Carranza, Obregón and Calles were following the "Constitutional" idea. Zapata and his indefatigable Indians in the south wanted return of the village lands, the commonly held and cultivated *ejidos*. Both Villa and Carranza sought his adherence. Villa won it.

Carranza's leadership came to be seriously threatened. He saved it by amending the Plan of Guadalupe to include "agrarian laws that shall favor the formation of small property, break up the *latifundia* and return the villages the lands of which they were unjustly deprived . . . laws to improve the condition of the rural peon, of the worker or the miner and the proletarian classes in general."

The United States, after treating with both sides, decided in favor of Carranza. When the *villistas* and *zapatistas*, who had held Mexico City, marched out, they left inscribed on the walls of the National Palace: "For rent, apply at the White House, U. S. A."

But Carranza, as president, was anything but the easy tool of the United States. When the American government, acting against Huerta, took Vera Cruz in 1914, Carranza, then in arms against Huerta, protested to Washington against the invasion of Mexico's territory. Though it was Woodrow Wilson's support that made his victory over both Huerta and Villa possible, when the First World War came, as a Mexican historian puts it, "Señor Carranza categorically refused to take part in it." He was pro-German, to state it flatly.

Carranza, whose exterior support stemmed from the fact that the United States considered him the lesser of three evils, capitalized, in forming his interior base, on the anti-foreign and anti-American feeling that was rising during the latter part of Díaz' reign, was accentuated by Madero's murder and exacerbated by the attack on Vera Cruz.

He had not started out as an advocate of social reforms, and every step that he took in that direction was forced on him. The Constitution of 1917, as he first presented it to the Constitutional Convention at Querétaro, contained provision for only a part of the agrarian program that the Revolution was now demanding. Villa, out of the Constitutional Convention but not out of the picture, rose in arms; but it was the danger that Obregón, Carranza's Secretary of War and military right-hand man since the early days of the Constitutional struggle, might take advantage of the discontent of the radicals to seize power that caused the *Primer Jefe* to permit the "reform" element to write its ideas into the constitution.

This Constitution, a model charter of liberties more honored in the breach than in the observance, has three famous and far-reaching clauses. The first, Article 27, best known to foreigners, postulated that the ownership of the land and waters of the national territory was vested in the nation, which has right to transmit title, thereby creating private property. It continues: "The nation shall at all times have the right to impose on private property the regulations that the public interest may dictate." On this fundamental principle was based a series of corollaries framed to one specific end: that of making it possible for the Mexican nation to reassert a measure of control over the agricultural and mineral resources that Díaz had so generously turned over to the foreigners. The distinction made between

the status of the soil and that of the subsoil was the entering wedge against the oil companies, lately grown rich and prosperous.

Article 33 gave the president of Mexico the right to expel, summarily, any foreigner considered "undesirable."

Article 123 was a charter for labor. It established the workers' right to form unions and to strike. It also established an eight-hour day, a six-day week, abolished labor for children under twelve, established the liability of the employer for accidents or occupational diseases and stated that a man's children could not be held liable for his debts.

The Constitution of 1917 revived the Reform laws against Church ownership of real property and secularized education.

It made re-election to the presidency illegal and set the term of office at four years.

This constitution was adopted amid great enthusiasm and high hopes. Carranza was elected president; the Revolution, temporarily stalled, seemed to be getting under way again.

In 1920, three years after its adoption and ten years after the overthrow of Díaz, land distribution had scarcely been started and no progress at all had been made toward establishing a government responsible to the nation. The politicians and the army were supreme. Controlled state elections, a hand-picked Congress, predatory officeholders, army generals grown rich on loot . . . the same old picture. If summary execution for crimes against property—the Díaz police method—was no longer practiced, murder was still an unofficial means of dealing with recalcitrant peasants and laborers, and the public peace of the Díaz regime was no more. If money no longer poured out of Mexico on the debt for the famous railroads, the railroads themselves were in ruins. Labor that had started in enthusi-

astically to organize under the guarantees of the constitution and the leadership of Spanish anarchists, had been betrayed; the constitution gave them the right to strike, but Carranza had revived an old law under which strike leaders could be outlawed as "revolutionaries." (!) Ten years of marching and counter-marching across Mexico, of revolution and counterrevolution, for what? More of the same.

As a finishing touch Carranza, when his term of office drew to a close, resorted to an old device, one used by Díaz after his first term of office, to assure his continuance in power. It was to put into the presidency, through the government's political machine, a successor whom he could easily control. He had Ignacio Bonillas, thought to be a manageable man, nominated.

As political leadership develops, both in and out of democracies, Alvaro Obregón, was, by all rights, the logical successor to the presidency. His military ability and loyalty had been largely responsible for the *Primer Jefe's* rise to and continuance in the position of leader of the Revolution. Furthermore, he was genuinely popular. He had played a conspicuous part in the framing of the new constitution and his ideas were known to be more liberal than Carranza's.

Alvaro Obregón was, like Carranza, a creole, but he did not spring from the aristocratic *grandes tierratenientes*. He was a *ranchero*, a man who owned a medium-sized farm or ranch, and had lived on it and superintended its cultivation himself before he took up the career of revolutionary. The city people call ranchers *gente rústica*, but Obregón was not a rustic. He was not highly educated, but he had studied and read in his younger years.

He was, furthermore, a practical man. If he was not prima-

rily an intellectual, he knew how to attract men to him who could help him with his thinking . . . notably Calles.

Obregón, with Calles and Adolfo de la Huerta, old comrades-in-arms, organized a revolt against the imposition of Bonillas. The usual Plan (*Plan de Agua Prieta*) was announced on April 22, 1920. Carranza, increasingly unpopular since the treacherous murder of Zapata and latter-day repressions of labor, was easily toppled. Labor and the agrarians were against him already; the army followed Obregón and the political opportunists—everybody in office in the “constitutional” government—switched without delay. Carranza fled, was betrayed, and was shot as he lay sleeping.

Obregón began his administration by reversing Carranza's anti-American policy, but the return of the Republican party to power in the United States and repercussions from Article 27 of the Constitution led to difficulties between the two governments. These might have proved fatal if there had not sprung up in the United States a strong public protest against our government's revival of the Henry Lane Wilson type of diplomacy in Mexico. The cause of friendship between the two nations began to be considered rather than the exclusive interests of the oil companies. A new base of exterior support in Mexico was beginning to be in evidence: it was to widen as years passed, and to affect interior events in Mexico profoundly.

Obregón's administration began fairly well. The distribution of land to the peasants was undertaken, though not on too great a scale. The workers were permitted to organize and to strike in an effort to gain in fact the improvement in their condition granted in theory under the new constitution. A program of popular education was inaugurated. The country's finances were taken in hand; the railroads were put in operation and

steps were taken to return them to their foreign owners; payment on the international debt was resumed. Obregón took care of his friends at the expense of the national treasury, it is true; but the flagrant and open robbery that had characterized the latter years of Carranza's rule was not so much in evidence.

This regime met difficulties over the question of the presidential succession. Calles, Obregón's right-hand man for many years, was the indicated candidate and Obregón marshaled the machine to put him in office. This did not please the military, whose prerogatives of spoil and loot had been somewhat reduced, and they organized a revolt to put Adolfo de la Huerta, third of the former triumvirate of Sonora, into the presidency. Obregón hurriedly summoned to his aid the disbanded *zapattistas* and with the loyal remnant of the army and labor's battalions, put up a determined resistance. The United States, which had recently recognized his government, decided not to permit the sale of arms to the rebels and this turned the issue against them.

Calles was, as Obregón had been, the heir-apparent and logical successor to the presidency. He made a clean sweep of the election and my authorities agreed that the election was honest. This does not mean that it was not managed and controlled by the government political machine. It simply means that Calles was accepted; he even had genuine support among large sections of Mexican public opinion.

There had been an opposing candidate, General Ángel Flores, but he sickened and died—poisoned, according to the accepted version, by a jealous mistress. No one has ever seriously credited the rumor that Obregón had him poisoned, but the fact that there was such a rumor shows how suspicious the Mexicans have become.

So far as any progress or benefit to Mexico is concerned, Obregón's period of office can be summed up in the expressive Spanish phrase: *total, nada*. Total result, nothing. When Calles took over, the country was in ruins again, disorganized and in debt. The Revolution 1910-1924: *total, nada*, unless you count their paper constitution that had come alive a time or two to take a whack at the British and American oil interests.

IV

MEXICO'S FIRST MODERN MAN

PLUTARCO ELÍAS CALLES assumed the presidency on December 1, 1924, and there began in Mexico a one-man rule that was to continue till 1935. It was not overt at first, naturally; Calles was too astute to commit such an error. As adviser and right-hand man to Obregón, the man who "made" the stubborn and hardheaded old *Primer Jefe*, he had been one of the most influential men of the Revolution for a long time. Under both Carranza and Obregón he had waited and served, and with the personality of the one-armed military hero still an important factor in national politics, he could afford to wait a little longer yet before seizing complete control himself.

Calles was—or is, since he is still alive—one of the few of the military leaders of the Revolution who could be called an educated man. He was not highly cultivated by the standards of the landowning aristocracy who sent their sons to Oxford and Paris and Madrid for polishing, but he had been a school-teacher and had had a bowing acquaintance with book-learning in his youth. His career shows him to be a man of action who can also reason and think and plan shrewdly. He was an organizer and a successful commander in war; he could be, as the record shows, a good financial manager. But he was, above all, a practical politician, perhaps the smoothest that Mexico has had since Díaz. He came very near to being the "administrator

and politician" that Mexico wants when it is not yearning for its Messiah.

Calles, like Obregón, started off fairly well. He had been loud in his outcries against corruption in government during the closing days of Carranza's period of power, and, as president, one of his first moves was to begin a vigorous administrative reform under the watchwords of efficiency and honesty in office.

If you ever doubt that one of Mexico's chief and most distressing problems is the wholesale, persistent and consistent robbery practiced by its public officials, you should examine the results obtained by an administration that is even halfway honest. Calles, even in this first period, the honeymoon of office, did not neglect his friends; but with rapacity held in reasonable check he was able, *in only nine months' time*, to pay off a deficit of more than forty-seven million pesos, to balance the budget, pay internal debts, resume interrupted foreign debt payments and found a national bank with a reserve of sixty-eight million pesos.

The problem of government that faced Calles was not simple. He must have realized that he had to keep the army happy; he and Obregón had grown neglectful during the previous administration and had seen forty per cent of it turn on them. He had also incurred obligations to labor and the agrarians and he needed them as a check on the army. To hold their support—by carrying forward the Revolution's programs of economic and social reform—it would be necessary to wound the foreign companies, whose influence with the United States government though waning was not yet waned; and Calles must have known that he could not go too far in that or he would bring down across his neck the Damoclean sword that had hung over every Mexican government since Madero.

He began by encouraging labor. He did this by bestowing official patronage on the *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana*, the CROM, which it is customary to compare with the American Federation of Labor. Under government patronage, this organization grew in strength and numbers. The rank and file found in increased government favor renewed hope in their fight for a better status. The labor leaders found many new ways in which the strike technique could be turned to profit, and they prospered accordingly.

The distribution of land among the peasants was resumed, though not on a large scale, it is true. But another old question that had agitated the Mexican masses off and on ever since the Independence was reopened, and consequences soon overshadowed Calles' failure to go forward rapidly with land reform.

No two people ever entirely agree on any one question in Mexico; certainly the true motives for Calles' policy toward the Church would be hard to prove. One school of opinion sees him as forced to this policy in order to break the power of a reactionary institution that, through manipulation of the believers and the faithful, protected its financial interests to the detriment of the forward march of the Mexican people. Others, who do not forget that Mexico is a country where Catholicism has deep roots, can see it only as a shrewd political move.

The Calles laws put teeth into the anticlerical provisions of the 1917 Constitution. The Church was deprived of legal standing and of the right to own and use private property, either real estate, stocks or mortgages; Church schools were forbidden; religious institutions, nunneries, monasteries, forbidden; priests disfranchised and prohibited from "criticizing the fundamental laws of the country." In the ensuing struggle between Catholics and government, churches were closed, Church schools and re-

ligious houses were closed, and finally, after rebellion had broken out in eighteen states, the high officers of the Church were deported.

The anticlerical campaign may have been a necessity dictated by the direction that the forward march of the Revolution was taking at the moment—but it was also very useful to Calles. It accomplished a triple or quadruple purpose. As I have mentioned, it distracted the attention of the agrarians and the workers from the fact that their lot was not actually growing any better. Second, it pleased certain interests in the United States and distracted their attention from Mexico's moves to lay hands on American-owned oil and land. Third, it caused an armed rebellion that gave the army something to do, an opportunity for action in the field, i.e., pocket-lining.

It is a well-established historical fact that the Catholic rebellion of 1926 and 1927 was kept alive in the states of Jalisco, Guanajuato and Colima, at the expense of immeasurable suffering and many lives, long after it could have been put down, because it gave the federal soldiery, and more specifically their commanders, an opportunity to get rich through direct and indirect looting. Calles permitted Ferreira, zone commander at Guadalajara, to nurse the rebellion along and adroitly shifted blame to Obregón. This maneuver had an effect that even more directly benefited Calles: It led to Obregón's elimination by assassination and Calles' undisputed assumption of the post of *Jefe Máximo*, the supreme leader, of the Revolution.

Calles was really Mexico's first modern politician. He took the Revolution to town with him, citified it and slicked it up. The old baroque methods of outright robbery, such as taking with you when you left office not only the public treasury but the office furniture as well (even a President of Mexico did this

once), were frowned on. The "public improvements program" as a system of political spoils division was introduced. Irrigation projects were begun, roads constructed—an expensive new highway was built to the city of Puebla. Construction companies, owned by Calles' political connections, flourished. Later on, when he left the presidency, Calles also acquired interests in this and other types of business.

The Revolution was apparently under way once more—labor was organizing, the army was busy, the peasants still had *hopes* of getting land—when Calles ran into trouble over the inherited problem of freeing Mexico's national resources from foreign control.

By the time he took office, the struggle over oil had overshadowed all other aspects of this question. The oil industry was the last of the foreign interests developed in Mexico, it was at that time the most prosperous and, what is more, it promised a bonanza for the future that the Mexican nation was anxious to wrest from foreign hands.

The State Department of the United States had stubbornly defended the oil companies on the ground that application of Article 27 to titles existing before the establishment of the Constitution of 1917 was retroactive and confiscatory.

Calles sought to dodge the direct issue and accomplish the desired end indirectly by having a law passed (in December, 1925) that required all oil companies to obtain a "confirmatory concession," to last fifty years, in place of the titles or concessions without limit that they then possessed. The State Department of the United States resisted this on the ground that it affected property rights so fundamentally as to constitute a confiscatory measure.

Foreign capital, particularly American, grew shy of Mexico.

Perhaps it even took reprisals; Mexican labor said it did and blamed American capitalism for the economic depression that ensued. (The Americans attributed it to the ill effect of the Calles labor policy.) As Calles' presidential term neared its close, he had to meet and deal with an economic situation under which the workers were growing restive, the misery of the rural population was becoming accentuated, discontent was increasing among the businessmen and townspeople and, since the public improvements program had to be curtailed, also among the politicians. This situation was to occur again in modern Mexican history; it is interesting to watch what happened.

Calles was, above all things, a political realist. He met the situation by making in 1927 a compromise agreement—some refer to it as a deal—with Ambassador Dwight Morrow on the question of oil. The petroleum act of 1925 was amended; “confirmatory concessions” of unlimited duration were to be issued to owners or leaseholders, on application. The Supreme Court, perennial mirror of official policy, handed down a decision that temporarily allayed fears as to the “confiscatory and retroactive” nature of the provisions of Article 27.

His compromise with the oil interests Calles followed up by putting a check on labor. This does not mean that he checked the labor movement; on the contrary, labor's organization went on apace; but coöperation between government and the labor leaders evolved it into a smooth-working machine to control the workers. From Luís Morones, CROM leader who had been elevated to the post of Secretary of Industry, Commerce and Labor, word went down that an armistice had been declared in the class war. A campaign to “educate” the workers in the proper use of the strike technique was undertaken. The gov-

ernment-controlled labor arbitrating boards began to take a more conciliatory attitude toward employers.

In the meanwhile, with a presidential election approaching, Obregón and Calles found a way to solve the problem of the succession. Their rubber-stamp Congress amended the constitution to permit a president to be re-elected after an intervening term, and to lengthen the period of office to six years. *Sufragio efectivo* had never been; *no reelección* was becoming an inconvenience, so out with it.

Obregón was elected by "default." This means that the other candidates did not finish out the race.

It came about in this way: General Francisco Serrano, friend and comrade of early days and Secretary of War during Obregón's administration, announced his candidacy, as did General Arnulfo Gómez, supposedly a white hope of the oil companies. It is not unlikely that they foresaw defeat at the polls. However that may be, each planned a revolt. Serrano was dining with friends, at Cuernavaca, plotting this revolt, as the official story goes, when Federal troops arrived and took them prisoners. They started toward Mexico City with them in custody. As captors and prisoners neared the Morelos state line, there was a moment of confusion. Perhaps Serrano and his thirteen friends tried "to escape"; at any rate, when the smoke of the army *mosquetones* cleared away, they were all dead. (I have met a man who had an invitation to that party. His wife was sick and he could not go. It is a very happy home.)

A few days later, General Gómez attempted to revolt, was captured and shot. After the various funerals, the political situation was clear. No other candidate came forward.

Obregón thus was unopposed at the polls, but he did not

live to take office. On the evening of July 17, 1928, while banqueting with friends at an inn in the suburbs of Mexico City, he was shot by a young artist who gained entrance by posing as one of the ambulating caricaturists who are an institution in Mexico City night-life. Official history says that Toral was a Catholic religious fanatic. Unofficial history says: "Obregón was dining with friends. . . ."

Luis León, a Calles man, spoke of the aftermath in an address delivered at the National Revolutionary Convention some months later: "Calles," he said, "who understood the gravity of the moment clearly enough to place all the authority and all the means at his disposal in the hands of General Obregón's most intimate friends so that they could investigate the murder . . . Calles, the man who grieved more deeply than any of them over the loss of his old comrade . . . Calles . . . (with great feeling) was calumniated by these men." They accused him, unofficially, of having had a hand in it.

But Calles, as León put it, "had manhood enough to master his grief." He also had the political perspicacity to foresee a scramble for the presidency among that reservoir of presidential aspirants, the Army of the Revolution. He immediately set about strengthening his counterbalance.

On September 1, 1928, in a message to the Congress, he announced the new "Calles Democratic Plan." The day of the military chieftain, the *caudillo*, was done in Mexico. The country was now ready to launch upon a new era through formation of a new national revolutionary party, in which even a real opposition should have its place. (The Díaz formula, remember.) The civilian Congress and the civilian state machines greeted this with applause. The country, weary of military rebellions, applauded.

Calles then called the generals together to propose that, in order not to upset the army, a civilian should be selected for president. This was a meeting of the heirs-apparent of the Revolution; many of them young men who had joined the Revolutionary Army in their teens and made it their sole career. Lázaro Cárdenas was there; he had joined the Constitutionalist Army at eighteen, had fought under Obregón in the campaign against Zapata and had become a protégé and favorite of Calles when, as a twenty-year-old lieutenant-colonel, he had persuaded *villista* forces sent against the latter in Sonora to follow his leadership in switching allegiance. Under Obregón and Calles he had been, alternately, zone commander and state governor. Juan Andreu Almazán was there. As a medical student at Puebla, in his teens, he had been active in a sub-rosa movement against Díaz. He had been a friend and companion of the first martyr of the Madero movement, Aquiles Serdán; he had been a Revolutionary general at twenty. Joaquín Amaro, Calles' Secretary of War, a man who had grown up in the Revolution and who had, with Calles' backing, imposed an iron discipline on the Revolutionary Army, was there. The Generals Cedillo, Escobar, Roberto Cruz, Madrigal, Mora, Amescua, Carrillo, Espinosa y Cordova, Limón, Mendoza, Jiménez Méndez, Ríos, Menge, Charis, all the military family, important and unimportant, were there and with the exception of Cárdenas and Amaro, all these had their say.

There was a long discussion that at times threatened to degenerate into a quarrel. Cedillo mentioned a meeting of the Generals Escobar, Ferreira and Manzo at the Regis Hotel, said by the newspaper *Universal* to have been for the purpose of selecting an interim president from among the generals. Escobar said that Calles knew about the meeting and that he would

go to a hundred others if he liked. General Mendoza read a paper saying that if army officers were given promotion and preferment on the basis of service and merit rather than on that of political favor, the army would no longer be concerned with the presidential succession. This was impatiently brushed aside. In the end, they all agreed to support the civilian president whom Calles should select.

Emilio Portes Gil, a lawyer and accomplished politician who was at that time following the usual pattern of rising to prominence by appealing to left sentiment, was selected by Calles to serve the fourteen-months term as interim president. Congress, of course, made it legal. Amaro, in the meanwhile, continued his reorganization of the army, with a view to forestalling the military rebellion brewing among the generals. Zone commanders were separated from troops among whom they had cultivated personal followings. Loyal troops were garrisoned at strategic points. Other measures were severer—so severe that they are only whispered about in Mexico, even today.

In May, 1929, a national Revolutionary Convention was called to meet at historic Querétaro, scene of the defeat of Maximilian and of the signing of the 1917 Constitution. Here the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario*, the PNR, was organized. Calles has been called the author of the one-party system in Mexico, but it was Carranza, with his Constitutionalist Army, who really was. What Calles did was to introduce the two-party system, for until the creation of the PNR the army had been supreme in Mexican politics.

Pascual Ortiz Rubio, former ambassador to Brazil, inclined to conservatism but known to be pliable, was backed by Calles to succeed Portes Gil. The convention nominated him.

The expected military rebellion, led by Escobar in the north

and Aguirre in Vera Cruz, materialized some months later. Calles assumed the office of Secretary of War, called on labor and the agrarians to aid the loyal troops, and organized a vigorous repression. Almazán crushed the movement in the north and broke the rebellion. Cárdenas, Amaro, Cedillo fought in the campaign. Commanding cavalry troops under Cárdenas was Manuel Avila Camacho, who had joined the "Águiles Serdán" brigade at Puebla at the age of seventeen, had become Cárdenas' right-hand man while the latter was zone commander in Michoacán in 1920 and had been associated with him as military officer and close friend almost continuously since.

The movement put down, Calles completed organization of his dictatorship.

The PNR, founded "to revive the era instituted by the Apostle of Mexican Democracy, Don Francisco I. Madero, and to lay foundations for civilian regimes of peace and liberty in the nation," proved a splendid labor-saving device. The plan it worked on was simple but effective. Party caucuses nominated candidates for state and national offices. Expenses were paid by contribution of a percentage of each public official's and public employee's salary. Voting lists were made up by public officials who were also party members. Voting was superintended by party members who were, often as not, also government employees, and it was not a secret ballot. Vote counting was done by official commissions where government employee and party member were blended; finally, both state and national legislatures were the final authority on the validity of their own elections. If a maverick managed to get by the polls and the vote-counting commissions, he could still be thrown out by the auto-electoral college. It was an airtight system and if the Mex-

ican people didn't bother to go to the polls, who can blame them?

Calles, from his home in Cuernavaca, his favorite of several estates scattered over the nation, hand-picked Mexico's public officials.

Under Ortiz Rubio, the regime became increasingly conservative. There is no doubt that Calles' friendship with Ambassador Morrow was one of his main sources of exterior support at that time; hence his appearance amid a cloud of Wall Street witnesses in Diego Rivera's now somewhat dated mural on the walls of the presidential palace.

Foreign capital, soothed, ventured again into Mexico, creating as by-product the Calles political millionaires. Labor was allowed to keep in condition by striking against those enterprises that were not sufficiently in touch with reality to know which side of whose bread to butter. The army, purged by the Escobar adventure, was given a new ideology. The old idea of its mission as creator of government was frowned on; that of the army as guardian and stabilizer was stressed. In practice, this meant that the army was to put down rebellions by disgruntled presidential aspirants and see to it that nobody interfered with the right of the PNR to elect its candidates at the polls.

The Revolution, 1932: Democracy, that had never been, was not. Land distribution, that had amounted to very little, had come to a virtual standstill. Labor reform reached a standstill: the government sided with the employers in a controversy over state laws permitting expropriation of factories that violated labor regulations. If wages had gone up, living costs had gone higher. The real condition of the peasants and the workers had not improved.

An increase in left agitation and left sentiment was the natural result. Mexico had been bombarded from abroad by anarchistic, syndicalistic, socialistic and communistic doctrines for a generation; they funneled in from Russia, from France and from Spain. Capitalism, identified with foreign oppression in Mexico, was an old enemy; the Mexican workers' struggle to throw off the yoke of the foreign oppressor now became part of the great world movement for revindication of the proletariat: the "success" of the Russian experiment drew minds in that direction. Especially enthusiastic was Vicente Lombardo Tolezano, professor of law turned labor leader, who had been to labor dictator Morones what Calles was to Obregón, an indefatigable assistant and adviser. In 1933 he split away from the CROM and formed his own organization, the Workers and Peasants Confederation (CGOC). The old CROM was disintegrating; Calles' means of keeping labor quiet was seriously threatened.

Insurrection threatened nearer at home. Four army generals, members of the Ortiz Rubio cabinet, were known to be dissatisfied with Calles' continued rule; they even discussed sending him an ultimatum. They were Lázaro Cárdenas, Joaquín Amaro, Juan Andreu Almazán and Saturnino Cedillo. They could not reach a concerted agreement; they did, however, resign from the cabinet. One, Cedillo, was rumored to be preparing a military rebellion. Another was said to have aspirations to reach the presidency by more pacific means.

Calles met this situation with his accustomed energy. Support of Ortiz Rubio, who had been the tool of his turn to the right, was summarily withdrawn late in August, 1932. Ortiz Rubio forthwith resigned.

General Abelardo Rodríguez, Ortiz Rubio's Secretary of

War, one of the Revolution's rough diamonds grown polished and lustrous with the enriching years, was selected by Calles and appointed by the Congress to finish out the term. Rodríguez, a *callista* millionaire, was given a cabinet that included men prominent in the rising left movement. Among them was Lázaro Cárdenas, who had as governor of Michoacán followed labor policies that clearly qualified him as a leader of left-wing sentiment. The other three generals were left in banishment.

Rodríguez revived the religious agitation by closing Mexico City churches; it may not have been a maneuver to distract the workers' and the agrarians' attention from the shortcomings of the regime, but it served the purpose. Many state legislatures, empowered to limit the number of priests, chose to eliminate them entirely. In "godless Tabasco" Tomás Garrido Canábal and his Red Shirts, repressing "Roman Catholic fanaticism," burned churches, destroyed images, murdered priests and coerced the faithful, with fanatical zeal. This Red-Shirt union-labor movement, spreading rapidly over the nation, was directly encouraged by members of Rodríguez' cabinet, among them Cárdenas, whose private labor organization, the *Confederación Michoacana del Trabajo*, later adopted the red and black uniform.

Rodríguez also set in motion once more the limping machinery of land distribution, which had come to a full stop under Ortiz Rubio.

Meanwhile, in the United States, laissez-faire capitalism, in crisis, was deemed a near-failure and an administration willing to experiment with new ideas of government regulation and control was voted into office. Ambassador Morrow was to go. With an election in the offing, Calles' main pillar of exterior support fell out from under him.

But the old *Jefe Máximo* had swung with the pendulum too often to allow this to faze him. He knew Mexican history; he had helped make it for twenty-five years. He knew the formula: to seize control of the current movement by giving it from its own ranks a leader whom he could manage and then to give this leader a new and inspiring plan on which to ride into office. The Plan could then be smothered out of existence and relegated to that Bluebeard's closet where dead Mexican plans are stored.

Within the inner circle of Mexican politicians three men had begun to emerge as presidential possibilities. One was Manuel Perez Treviño, occupant of the important post of chairman of the executive committee of the PNR, the man most favored by the old-line *callistas*. Another was Saturnino Cedillo, the Indian Revolutionary general who had developed a strong following in the army and among the agrarians, especially in the State of San Luis Potosí. Cedillo was not seriously considered by the Calles politicians, but he was very ambitious himself. The third was Lázaro Cárdenas.

Cárdenas had influence enough with the army to offset Cedillo's strength there and this was very important at the moment. He had been a staunch advocate of returning to the Indian villages their communal lands (the Zapata reform) and he had defended this policy when the reaction of the Ortiz Rubio period had declared it a failure. More than that, in fact most important of all, he had been an outstanding champion of labor's cause. He was one of the three state governors who had, in 1932, defied the party machine by passing a law to permit expropriation of factories that shut down or refused to obey labor regulations. He had, as I have said, championed the anti-

clerical and the Red-Shirt trade-union cause while a member of Rodríguez' cabinet.

Calles was, to a certain extent, committed to Perez Treviño and it was Calles' son Rodolfo who actually launched Cárdenas' candidacy for the official candidacy. It was said at the time that Rodolfo Calles took this step without his father's consent, but only the politically naïve could see this version as anything but part of a maneuver that enabled Calles to choose his left leader without having to come to an open break with the old-line element.

His candidate selected, Calles launched the idea of his Plan.

He prefaced it, as he had prefaced introduction of the "*Plan Democrático Calles*," with admission that the Revolution had, so far, fallen short of its goal. It was the human element that had failed, said he; it failed through lack of capacity, lack of understanding, lack of sincerity. Now had come the time to form a new detailed program of action, based on study, on statistics, on the lessons of experience. It was not to be too radical . . . to embark on social experiments at the expense of the hungry masses was a crime. It was to be based on reality and on sincerity and on the true impulse of the Revolution. By implication, it was to be a form of nationalistic socialism built around the personality of the supreme leader, the *Jefe Máximo*, Calles.

The idea proved immediately popular among the sectors it was aimed at, that is, the workers and the peasants.

The Six-Year Plan was not a detailed program of action based on study, on statistics and on the lessons of experience, but rather a loose statement of the panacea that the men of the moment offered as cure for Mexico's age-old ills.

It affirmed that, in the ideology of the Mexican Revolution, the State should be not only the guardian of national sover-

eignty and keeper of the public peace and order, but also the active administrator of all the vital sources of the nation's economy; in plain English, it should control everything. Economic nationalism was stated as a basic policy. Specific points of the program were the speeding up of land division, the inclusion of the hacienda peons in the class eligible to receive land and water grants, and the establishment of a system of agricultural credit. A program of public works was planned, irrigation systems, highways and secondary roads were to be built. Twelve thousand schools were to be built. A program of socialistic education was to be initiated. No religious doctrines, but "true, scientific and rational knowledge should be implanted in the minds of the pupils in order to give them an exact and positive knowledge of the world they live in." (What wouldn't you give for "an exact and positive knowledge"!) In the section on national economy, the increase in coöperatives was advocated and the elimination of the greatest possible number of middlemen set as a primary purpose. The nationalization of the subsoil was to be carried out. The oil companies' "corner"—they use the verb *acaparar*, which means just that—on national resources was to be broken. A policy of restriction on oil concessions was to be followed and existing concessions were to be reduced. The Mexican native miner and miners' coöperatives were to be encouraged. Rates on electric power were to be lowered so that industry would "be developed *by* electric power rather than *for* electric power." Immigration was to be encouraged, especially that of Latin blood that could bring technical knowledge and training to the country. There were a number of general propositions for revitalizing labor laws, among them, unobtrusively stated, one destined to have as tremendous an effect on Mexican history and Mexican economy as any sin-

gle law has ever had: Collective bargaining was to be the only basis of the relation between employer and employee and a clause obliging the employer not to accept non-union labor was to be made compulsory in all labor contracts.

The Calles machine handed Cárdenas this Plan for his platform and elected him on it.

There were several opposition candidates. The communists nominated Hernán Laborde, their national president. Adalberto Tejeda had the backing of several independent socialist parties; he was one of the governors who had promulgated the radical labor laws in 1932. Several conservative groups supported Antonio Villarreal, an anti-trade union and anti-communist agrarian. The election followed traditional lines. *Villarrealistas* were reported to have been driven from the polls at several places and a PNR car filled with men armed with machine guns was seen in Mexico City streets. There was some fighting; a few were killed, but not many.

Cárdenas wrote in on his ballot the name of Garrido Canábal, whose Red Shirts had supported him vigorously. Garrido Canábal was at that time the strongest man in Mexico, next to Calles.

An overwhelming majority for Cárdenas was returned. Both Laborde and Tejeda joined the *villarrealistas* in charging that it was fraudulent, but nothing ever came of the charge.

General Heriberto Jara, president of the official government party, in introducing the Second Six-Year Plan said of the First Six-Year Plan: (The translation is the official one, not mine):

"The attention of the whole world and specially that of the United States of America and of the Latin-American Countries was attracted by this event, really unusual, and the Six-Year Plan, while it was being applied in Mexico, without difficulties

or obstacles, became, abroad, the subject of the most passionate discussions and of the hardest criticisms. The smallest accusation formulated was that the plan constituted such an unattainable utopia that its execution would be absolutely impossible.

"The presence of the First Six-Year Plan meant, of course, that Mexico was definitely abandoning the old liberal and physiocratic principle of 'let do, let pass.' The bourgeois formula that gave origin to the capitalistic economical system, ceased to have the desired effect in Mexico, and social activity, organized and regulated, was then orientated for the first time towards predetermined objectives of general welfare. When the First Six-Year Plan was branded utopian, the foreign countries did not know General Cárdenas as well as the people of Mexico, that appointed him to carry out the execution of the Six-Year Plan. Cárdenas got to power by the popular will, that is, because the people of Mexico wanted him to realize the Sexennial Plan.

"Cárdenas did not defraud the people. THE SIX-YEAR PLAN WAS NOT ONLY REALIZED IN A TOTAL MANNER BY THE CÁRDENAS REGIME, IT SURPASSED ITSELF." (Capitals his.)

With the last phrase, I think all students of recent Mexican history will agree.

CÁRDENAS, THE GIANT KILLER

LÁZARO CÁRDENAS, when nominated for the presidency, was, it is generally agreed in Mexico, "little known outside political circles." That means that the foreign colony and the foreign press representatives there had paid little or no attention to him; he was just another of the innumerable generals who weave in and out of public office and military zone commands now promoted to be another Calles puppet. He soon became very well known to them all, but with vague antecedents, with a career behind him that had a minimum of color on the face of it, there was little about him that you could turn into vivid conversational material or copy. The events the man precipitated were dramatic, full of color; the man himself, in the official social life of the capital and in interviews with the now interested foreign press, was restrained, courteous, not quite sure of himself perhaps and therefore exerting self-control, his thoughts carefully hidden behind his impassive Indian face. Someone applied to him the adjective "enigmatic"; it fitted his sphinx-like air and it has stuck.

Cárdenas is an enigma, I think, only when you try to judge him without taking into due consideration all his background. It is not enough to study his career when as man of the hour in Mexico, official propaganda was touching up his personality to fit the picture of Cárdenas, the modern Juárez, leading the Mexican masses out of their age-old bondage to cruel masters

and a fruitless earth. There are also those other years to be considered, the much longer time when Cárdenas "was little known outside political circles."

When you start examining Cárdenas' life you will look in vain for him in any other. The fact of his having been an army officer from his early twenties is confusing only if you forget that the army or the armies of the Revolution have been first and foremost political factions.

Cárdenas was born in 1895 in the little town of Jiquílpan, in the agricultural state of Michoacán. At six he was sent to grammar school, learned reading, writing, arithmetic and elements of history and geography. At eleven we find him apprenticed to the district tax collector, who was also the state deputy and owner of the town printing office. If you don't agree that that's entering politics, it's because you've never had occasion to note the close relation between small-town printing offices and political job printing. It is easy to imagine how young Lázaro, alternating between the shop and the tax office, observed at an early age all the gentle uses through which public office can be turned to the private profit of the holders thereof. When a liberal newspaper was started, he helped edit and publish it. He must have served his patron well, for at eighteen we catch a glimpse of him as town jailer, a post that is one of the juiciest plums in any man's small-town political organization. Calles himself had no more brilliant a start; his first political appointment was that as jailer at Agua Prieta, in Sonora, and he was well up in his thirties when he got the job.

In July, 1913, while still in his eighteenth year, Cárdenas left the post as jailer to join liberal guerrilla forces that had sprung up to combat Huerta, who had five months before overturned the Madero government. He thoughtfully took his only

prisoner with him, says the legend. A year later we find him leading cavalry under Obregón, with the rank of first captain. He distinguished himself in subsequent battles against the *zapatistas* and quickly rose to the rank of major. With the greater portion of Obregón's cavalry, he deserted to Villa in January 1915, receiving the rank of lieutenant-colonel under the new command. In March, as commander of a detachment of 450 sent against Calles, Obregón's ally, he re-deserted, to Calles, taking his men with him. He received another promotion and was a full colonel at twenty. In 1918, he was sent to the oil fields of the Huasteca region to put down banditry led by General Manuel Peláez, hope of the oil companies. In 1920, when Obregón and Calles revolted against Carranza, Cárdenas was one of the first officers to place his forces at their disposal. In 1920, at twenty-five, he was brigadier-general in the post of zone commander and provisional civil governor of his native state of Michoacán, quite a responsible position for so young a man. An election dispute arose: Calles sought to have the gubernatorial candidate who had received the popular majority kept from taking office and Cárdenas took a strong stand against the "imposition." However, when de la Huerta revolted, Cárdenas fought loyally for Obregón and Calles. He was rewarded with the post of zone commander at Vera Cruz and, in 1928, was permitted to run for the office of governor of the State of Michoacán. His platform was agrarian reform and admiration of Obregón and Calles, a very necessary plank if you wanted to get elected.

He made a vigorous campaign, and it is said that he visited every village in the state. As governor, he increased the number of schools, made the teaching of revolutionary theories mandatory, organized labor unions and peasant leagues. He distrib-

uted more land during his first term than had been distributed in all the years before. He organized an informal peasant militia, composed of men and women alike, to combat the bands of terrorists hired by the *hacendados* to harass them as they worked their newly acquired lands.

The pattern was taking shape. What Cárdenas did with success in the state of Michoacán, he was to undertake on a national scale later on.

When Escobar rebelled, Cárdenas rushed to the aid of his long-time patrons, and again was duly rewarded. In 1930, when Portes Gil, as president of the PNR, threatened Calles' leadership by heading an incipient left-wing revolt, Calles dismissed Gil from the post and appointed Cárdenas, who was even further to the left, thus neatly blocking Gil's maneuver. In this position, Cárdenas defended Calles against left-wing attack; was himself attacked by the right element in the Senate. He resigned, and was installed as Ortiz Rubio's Secretary of *Gobernación*, the second most important political post in the government. This is the time when he flirted with the idea of forming a compact with Almazán, Amaro and Cedillo to overthrow Calles and when the powers that were, getting knowledge of it, accepted all four generals' resignations. Cárdenas was later reinstated in the cabinet as Rodríguez' Secretary of War, the position he occupied when selected as official PNR candidate.

All of this points to one thing: Cárdenas was, by the time he reached the presidency, a thoroughly seasoned politician who had learned the technique at the knee of the old master, Calles. As you watch his subsequent career, time and time again you will see the Calles touch. As a child, his burning desire had been to be a general and he had achieved this ambition at

twenty-five. In 1934, at thirty-nine, only one man stood between him and supreme power in Mexico. This was the Cárdenas of "Mexico's political circles."

When he was introduced to the outside world as Calles' candidate for the presidency, he apparently made very little impression, for in Mexico City they say that no one realized that a new star was rising in the political firmament. They noticed, however, that his behavior was not quite orthodox.

Though nomination by the PNR was equivalent to election, Cárdenas made a genuine campaign. One admiring authority says that he traveled sixteen thousand miles, by train, car and horseback, to city, town and mountain village, making himself known to the Mexican people as no other candidate for president ever had. Another more admiring authority puts the number of miles at more than 27,000. Both figures, like most statistics in Mexico, are probably based on a rough guess, but all agree that Cárdenas did a great deal of traveling.

After the election, what is more, he continued these tours. Mexico City and the politicians knew him not. Round the country he went, visiting cities, towns, villages.

Everyone who writes on Cárdenas comes sooner or later to the point where he tells how he loves to squat with the Indians and listen gravely to their stories of want, wrong, and oppression. I have never witnessed one of these scenes, but this custom of his is too well known to require confirmation. It is very important to remember that Cárdenas, after listening to the peons, promised that he, personally, would right these wrongs and fill these wants.

In studying this campaign, I found him already holding these informal audiences on a large scale. But the picture seemed too

static; was that *all* Cárdenas did on these turns about the country? Investigation revealed that it was not.

The best possible authority that I have found to quote on this point is the officially approved biography written by Nathaniel and Sylvia Weyl, *The Reconquest of Mexico*. They say:

"In Vera Cruz, Cárdenas told the stevedores union that he was 'convinced of the imperious necessity of organizing the working people. . . . All government requires the support . . . of the labor element . . . to enforce the laws . . . The various selfish groups in the country will offer resistance to radical legislation . . . and only when organized are the workers in a position to force me, or any other citizen who is in power, to satisfy the needs of the people.'

"In virtually every village Cárdenas repeated his slogan: 'Workers of Mexico, Unite!' He added: 'There is not a single inter-union struggle which is not approved of by capitalism.' Preaching labor unity was not enough. *In eight states, Cárdenas intervened personally to bring warring factions together.*" (Italics mine.)

Cárdenas, in his long pre- and post-election tours, was not content with promising the peasants and the workers a new and better Mexico, he also organized them. As Mexico's population and industries are distributed, judicious organization of eight states would give you absolute control of the national labor situation.

If Calles had taken the Revolution to town, Cárdenas was taking it back to the country. When he accepted the nomination for president, he really meant to be president. His first problem in government was to dispose of Calles and the *callistas*, and in his unorthodox campaign, which was not for the presidency that he was sure of, but for the dictatorship that

he intended to have, Cárdenas was working on this problem.

No sooner had Cárdenas returned to the national capital, taken the oath and been installed in his Mexico City role of Calles puppet, than a wave of strikes broke out. To give you an idea, in 1933 there were 13. In 1935 there were 643.

Lombardo Toledano's CGOC was active in organizing and in striking, and Toledano's conferences with Cárdenas over labor questions were noted. The remnant of the old CROM—divided into two groups, one following Ricardo Treviño, the other Morones, now shorn of his power if not of his famous diamonds—was losing importance.

About this time, significantly, the Mexican courts and labor arbitration boards, in which the government representative had the deciding vote, began to make decisions that consistently favored labor.

It may have been a coincidence also that these strikes were largely against foreign-owned companies that had flourished under the wing of the *callista* millionaires, but I seriously doubt it. I may be unduly suspicious of events that "happen" to work out neatly and fittingly in politics, perhaps because I had an early and very educational introduction to the game from the staff of a small-town newspaper that had no reason for being except politics, and later from the city-room of the organ of a tri-state political dictatorship that controlled almost as many people as there are in Mexico. If these coincidences had occurred in American politics, I should have no hesitancy in surmising that a deal had been made. Mexicans say that there was and that Lombardo Toledano and Cárdenas made it.

Cárdenas inspired these strikes indirectly, if not directly. He had shown the way at Vera Cruz:

"The various selfish groups in the country will offer resistance to radical legislation . . . and only when organized are the workers in a position *to force me*, or any other citizen who is in power, to satisfy the needs of the people. . . ." (*Italics mine.*)

Strikes broke out against the hitherto inviolable Huasteca Oil Company, Standard Oil subsidiary; against the Mexican Tramways Company, Canadian owned; against the Ford Motor Company; the San Rafael Paper Company, owned by Spanish and French capital; against the French-owned textile factories; against British- and American-owned mining companies; against the Mexican Telephone Company, owned by the American Telephone and Telegraph Company.

Calles himself had stock in this last and he emerged from the background to defend his own. He gave an interview to the press. The action of the strikers was hindering the march of progress, he said, making it impossible for the country to take advantage of present opportunities to go forward. Agitators were attempting to create a schism . . . to embarrass the government . . . to disturb the march of progress. . . . The strikes of selfish interest, said Calles, must stop. (These same sentiments were to be heard again in Mexico City, in late 1940 . . . from Cárdenas.) He mentioned Ortiz Rubio, which was, to say the least, tactless.

Cárdenas allowed two days to pass before he spoke. When he did, it was to explode forever the myth that he was a Calles puppet.

He had provoked no schisms, he said; disgruntled politicians, failing preferment in the new government, had done that. They had used every means to obstruct his administration, a whispering campaign and other treasonable actions. The strikes

were the natural consequence of the necessary readjustment between the "two factors of production," and, with a proper solution, would "improve the condition of the workers within the economic possibilities of capitalism." Furthermore:

"The Federal Executive is determined to act decisively in carrying out the program of the Revolution and the Six-Year Plan, without paying any attention to the alarm of representatives of capitalism. . . . I hereby declare that I have full confidence in the workers and peasants of the country and trust that they will act with the wisdom and patriotism that the legitimate interests they represent demand of them."

Cárdenas received an avalanche of pledges of support. Labor and the peasants were with him, of course, enthusiastically so; a new hope was rising. State legislatures, now cognizant that the voice of the old oracle would be heard no more from the groves of government, hastened to applaud. The national deputies, without exception, approved. The left-wing group of the Senate, sixty-one strong, also approved. The professional politicians and bureaucrats got aboard the bandwagon.

Cárdenas reorganized his cabinet, excluding the more dyed-in-the-wool *callistas*. The CGOC, the Miners Union, the Electricians Union, the Telephone Workers Unions, the powerful Railroad Workers Union, the largest in the country, and other labor groups met and organized the Proletarian Defense Committee.

"Strikes will end only when there has been achieved a complete transformation of the bourgeois society in which we live," they declared.

They had cause to unite, for Cárdenas, in defying Calles,

had also defied foreign capitalism, especially American, the powerful interests that had become almost as strong and influential under Calles as in the later days of Díaz.

The *callistas* began their counterattack. Shock troops were the Gold Shirts, fascist organization headed by Nicolás Rodríguez Cedillo, the Bull, though a Cárdenas ally against Calles, Garrido Canábal and company, was suspected of flirting with some of the lesser survivors; he was given a post in the cabinet, where an eye could be kept on him. A healthy intrigue was forming around Joaquín Amaro, who had shifted back into the *callista* camp for the moment.

Cárdenas' overwhelming labor and peasant support was more than a match for these. I can easily imagine him watching for the appearance of another, blacker cloud in the sky—a reaction from the United States government.

But Morrow was gone. Josephus Daniels, the man who as Secretary of the Navy had carried out Wilson's order to seize Vera Cruz on April 21, 1914, was ambassador to Mexico and in the toughest spot a diplomat was ever sent to. Nothing but friendly expressions emanated from him.

Calles went to the United States "for his health." When a Mexican politician goes to the United States, it means one thing only to the Mexican public; he has gone to seek aid for his cause from the interests most likely to favor it. He returned . . . and still no cloud.

Labor began to demand the expulsion of Calles and his leading henchmen ("*only when organized can the workers force me . . .*").

On December 22, 1935, a gigantic meeting was held in the Zócalo, the great central square of Mexico City that, flanked as it is by the National Palace and the cathedral, is also the center

of the Mexican nation. Two hundred thousand enthusiastic listeners heard Cárdenas speak.

Mexico's needs were known to them, he said. He had discussed them fully in his campaign. The Revolution, converted at last into government, should fulfill the promises it had made during the long years of struggle. But reactionaries, men who had once waved the flag of the Revolution themselves, were trying to block this program. They charged communism, they influenced foreign correspondents to write that the government was disintegrating, that the masses were out of hand. This was the work of traitors: he named Calles, Calles' son-in-law, he mentioned General Tapia, Agustín Riva Palacio, Melchor Ortega, and told of valuable concessions of theirs that he had canceled. But the heart of his speech was this:

"The Mexican people should know that the reaction cannot turn back the social program of the Revolution, that they cannot dominate the Republic; that the Government of the United States of America, as well as other governments, will not let these bad Mexicans influence them, because they know them and know their selfish purpose; *the United States will not intervene in our internal affairs, first, because with its Good Neighbor policy it has given us many proofs of the respect it feels for the sovereignty of other countries, and second, because it is profoundly concerned with meeting the problems that have arisen within its own territory.*" (Italics mine.)

Nothing could have been truer; Cárdenas put in words in 1935 what the oil companies did not realize till after expropriation fell upon them.

This December 22nd speech was the go-ahead signal. Within a few months the workers had combined into the greatest labor organization that the nation had ever known, the CTM (*Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos*), and the pale, hand-

some spellbinder, Lombardo Toledano, was at the head of it. The CGOC was the nucleus, of course; three thousand other unions, all over the nation, swelled the membership to well over a half a million.

Calles, Luis Morones, Luis L. León and Melchor Ortega were expelled from the country by presidential order on April 10, 1936.

Cárdenas, no longer obscure and unnoticed, now began the period of his career when cheers and curses were to fly about his head continually. If you were for him, you were humanity's friend and a true democrat to those who were for him; a communist to those who were against. If you were against him, you were a sensible realist to those who were against him, and a fascist to those who were for him. It is one of the curious little ironies of modern political history that Tomás Garrido Canábal, whose Red-Shirt union-labor-movement helped put Cárdenas in office, when expelled from Mexico by Cárdenas on the score of fascistic activities, was refused admission to the United States on the grounds that he was a dangerous communist. (This was, of course, long before Hitler and Stalin celebrated their marriage of the earth and sky.)

Within a little over a year after taking office, Lázaro Cárdenas had accomplished what no other political or military leader had been able to do in all Mexican history. He had overthrown a firmly entrenched conservative dictatorship without resorting to military rebellion or political assassination.

Furthermore, in doing so, he had set going again the stalled car of the Revolution; he had given it an armor-plate, a gun turret and tractor tread, turning it into a sort of modern tank that could crash relentlessly through the barricades of the capitalistic system.

But capitalism, wounded by the fall of Calles, was not yet dead. In the north, at Monterrey, where steel factories, iron foundries, breweries, bakeries, the numerous industries and manufactories that give the city its title of first industrial center of Mexico, were largely controlled by foreign capital, there arose a labor movement "against communism." In this, from Mexico City, was seen the hand of General Almazán, gaining political strength there as zone commander, and Portes Gil, the ubiquitous political quick-change artist whose only failure as a politician is that he is too clever by half. Gil had been a left in the early days when Calles was rising to power, had swung right as president, had swung back left again—in an attempt to seize power from Calles—under Ortiz Rubio; had been credited with having encouraged Cárdenas in the revolt against Calles and, following Calles' fall, was now trying to take labor strength from Cárdenas in a sort of straddle. He was attempting to form a center, a thankless task in a land where you have to be either for or against.

Cárdenas met this challenge, as he was to meet others as time went on, by direct counterattack. The Monterrey middle-of-the-road non-communistic trade-unionism was scored as a reactionary maneuver and open war was declared on the capitalistic system. His was a regime of law, the president said, revolutionary law favoring the weaker side in the class struggle. Strikes were a weapon of self-defense . . . and if the employers grew weary of the struggle, "let them turn their factories over to the government or the workers." This would be patriotism.

The Monterrey crisis past, Cárdenas rapidly solidified his position with the laboring masses by vigorously encouraging the coöperative movement. This, of course, cut out the em-

ployer class altogether and left only the government (Cárdenas) and the workers.

There was an obstacle in the path of developing the coöperative movement in Mexico as it has been developed in other countries: lack of capital. Neither the government nor the workers could dream of founding industries and financing them till capitalistic competitors should be squeezed out by commercial competition. Furthermore, the aggressive ideology of a Revolution impatient to realize hopes too long deferred scarcely had place for such an idea. The solution was, of course, to take over the industries as they were taking over the land, and this Cárdenas set in to do on a large scale. Labor, organized and inspired, was backed up by administrative policy and law.

Administration of law in Mexico has always been a reflection of the personal policies of the man in power. (I gave up the idea of studying the theory of Mexican law when I read that "two months after Cárdenas assumed the presidency, he amended the constitution to . . ."). Lest there should be any deviation from this under his administration, Cárdenas, in 1936, had the term of office of the judges of the Mexican Supreme Court of Justice changed from life-tenure, as it had been, to a six-year period coinciding with the presidential term. Offices in the judiciary are filled by direct presidential appointment, by appointment by the Secretary of *Gobernación* or by appointment from tribunals made up of officials selected by these. They are, therefore, entirely under political control.

Mexican labor legislation is voluminous and labyrinthine, as law is everywhere, but it has a few biting teeth that can easily be singled out. In the first place, there is the closed-shop law: employers cannot employ non-union labor. Labor can strike

for many reasons, among them "to bring about a balance between factors of production." This, of course, can mean anything; interpretation is up to the arbitrating boards. These have three members, a representative of labor, a representative of the employer and a government official. This, of course, gives the government the balance of power. When a strike is in progress, the government closes the factory to employer and employee alike, but the employer must continue to pay the employees' wages. The "awards" or decisions are made by the Federal boards. Early in his term of office Cárdenas expressed the official policy (in a speech at Monterrey) that "the limit of the workers' demands should be the industry's capacity to pay." If the employer claims the demands are exorbitant, it becomes a "conflict of an economic order" and arbitration boards, with the help of experts, decide his "capacity to pay."

The last link in the chain is the law providing that the factory can be expropriated and turned over to the workers when it refuses to obey labor laws or labor decisions or when it ceases operation.

Various combinations can be worked within this frame of law. The usual one was for the workers to make demands to "balance factors of production." The strike would be declared legal and after various legal steps it would be decided that the demands were "within the industry's capacity to pay." The expropriations law then provided the pincer-device: if an employer acceded to demands that involved operating at a loss, he would soon be forced to close down, and, closing, lose his properties to the workers; if he refused to obey the decision, his property would be taken over and operated under a receivership till a new investigation and a new and mandatory award would be made; if he chose to litigate and stall for time, he

also lost money (production ceased, wages continued) and if, in the end, he was not able to resume operations, he lost his property to the workers. . . . With union officials and the politicians in close coöperation, there was no loophole except to buy out one or the other—or both.

In the heyday of the Cárdenas administration, when he and the Revolution reborn were sweeping into power, the hand of the worker was laid on every major and minor industry in the nation. Both labor and land expropriation laws were used in taking over the agricultural industries. Cotton-planting sections in the north, the cane plantations in Morelos and Michoacán and Vera Cruz, the chicle industry in Chiapas, the banana and fruit-growing industries in Tabasco and other southern states, the henequén industry in Yucatán, the maguey plantations in Hidalgo and central states—these were expropriated almost in their entirety. Sugar refineries were taken over, textile mills, the silk and rayon knitting industry almost completely, shoe factories, narrow-gauge railroads, bus lines, truck lines, coast-wise shipping lines, lumber companies, the fishing industry, printing establishments, mills, bakeries, foundries, a few mines.

The National Railways, in which foreign capital had a third direct interest, were taken over by the government. Cárdenas consolidated the bonded debt with the national debt (both had owing unpaid interest to more than the amount of the original debts) and set up a government department to run the lines.

Native and foreign capitalism took blow after blow . . . on the chin. The northern cotton industry had been largely developed by American and British capital; the sugar industry had been dominated by American capital and the *callistas*; the chicle industry and the fruit-growing industries in the south were dominated by American companies; the henequén indus-

try by native and foreign capital. It is interesting to note that the German-owned coffee plantations in the southern state of Chiapas were left practically intact.

The wave of strikes that had begun in 1935 continued on through 1936 and reached an even greater peak in 1937, when there were 833. But during this year some of them began to have motives other than the offensive against capitalism.

Many of the new experiments did not show the expected quick results and the workers and peasants were not happy about it. They expressed their discontent in the way they knew best—the strike.

The peasants had been the first to receive attention under the new regime; Cárdenas had set about distributing land on a wholesale scale during his first year of office. The first harvest was disappointing. Apologists laid it to bad weather, and the season was certainly not favorable. But there were other factors: the *ejidatarios* became everywhere involved in “politicking”; local politicians put in charge of distributing the land favored their own and their political followers’ personal interests. Some of the peons had better and more numerous plots within the *ejido*; others had to take the leavings. For another thing, the practice of cultivating land in common, though the historic and traditional one of the Mexican Indians, was new to a large percentage of the *ejidatarios*, who had been accustomed in their lifetimes to working as share-croppers or agricultural day laborers. (The *ejido*, you will remember, had all but disappeared during the Díaz regime.) The new system required numerous readjustments that were not quickly made.

There were reasons for discontent among the industrial workers. In the first place, the closed-shop law that gave the unions such a powerful fulcrum in dealing with the employer

also gave them an absolute control over the worker. If a worker failed to obey union instructions or if he failed to please union officials or their friends, he could, on one pretext or the other, be expelled from the union—to starve, for expulsion meant blacklisting. This, of course, gave union officials, petty and great, enormous power, and led to continual jockeying for favor and for preferment, within the union organization and within the industry, where all but a few confidential employees, members of the management, were union members. In the worker-owned and operated factories, the coöperatives, the union was supreme.

In these factories, efficiency fell and production fell. It was found impossible to maintain the wage level that was being paid in privately owned industry.

At the same time, the cost of living was rising. The decrease in food production sent food prices up; the government's policy of monetary inflation (to finance its program of social reform it resorted to short-term borrowing from the Bank of Mexico, which increased issuance of paper currency) also contributed. Wage increases did not keep pace.

What happened in the sugar industry will illustrate other causes contributing to discontent and unrest.

In Morelos and in Vera Cruz, there had been established model systems of coöperative sugar raising and coöperative sugar refining. The cane country was divided into *ejidal* communities and the government, through its Ejidal Bank, advanced the money to finance the crop. Refineries, either government-built or expropriated, were financed by the Workers' Bank. Profits were to be distributed to the growers on the basis of amount of cane delivered and to the workers on the amount of time put in.

Workers and growers fell out because the distribution of profits favored the former. Local politicians with personal interests to serve incited the factions against each other. The harvest yields were below expectations. The worker-efficiency in the factories was low, costs high. There were strikes, there was sabotage, there was bomb-throwing. Peasants and workers were pitted against each other. The Revolution, set on its way at last under a new leader, threatened to fall apart through dissension in its lower ranks.

As the year 1937 ran its course and it was seen that the second harvest would be no better than the first, the bright fame that Cárdenas had won in overthrowing Calles and storming the capitalistic citadel began to fade. The spectacular failure of the 1937 harvest at La Laguna, the cotton-growing section that had been expropriated and turned over to the workers amid great excitement in 1936, was largely caused by a drought, but the workers, launched on the experiment by a man, were inclined to blame him when it did not show results.

But by the time the first returns from his agrarian and co-operative experiments were indicating that Cárdenas the economist had not the magic formula of success that Cárdenas the politician knew, the Revolution's man of the hour had already set out on another giant-killing expedition that was soon to absorb the attention of the entire Mexican nation and completely overshadow passing economic failures.

With a new approach and a new instrument and a new technique, Cárdenas was attempting the feat that Carranza had not been able to bring off, that Obregón had failed at, that Calles had run into difficulties over: he was trying to bring the mighty oil companies to heel.

VI

PETROLEUM, THE GIANT KILLED

A FEW statistics will show the economic reason behind Mexico's long struggle for control of its oil production.

Year in and year out, about 75 per cent of Mexico's exports are mineral products. Silver was once the chief item and it is still a large one. But as silver declined in importance, that of oil and oil products (from around 1915 on) increased until they came to comprise 20 per cent of the total exports.

Mining in Mexico is 90 per cent foreign-owned; the oil industry was 95 per cent foreign-owned. Thus when mineral products were sent abroad, there came back to Mexico only the money necessary to cover the cost of operating the properties; the profits remained in foreign lands. All the Mexicans got out of it was pay for the work of extracting mineral wealth; as they saw, they were hirelings in their own land, and poorly paid ones at that.

Mining is old in Mexico; its bonanza age is passed. To hold its own, the industry has to locate and open new mines continually. The rich veins are being worked or are worked out; the low-grade ores to which the industry must now turn require large capital investments for processing. Mexico's major metal product, silver, has been losing world importance steadily; its value is now artificially sustained by the United States government. Furthermore, the mining industry is scattered all over the nation; units move about as new mines are opened and old ones abandoned.

Oil is the modern world's precious mineral. It turns the engines of commerce; it runs the navies of the world. Furthermore, in Mexico it is concentrated in two or more sections where the great oil pools lie. It is worth noting that though metals normally constitute half of Mexico's exports and oil only a fifth, the Mexican General Board of Statistics considers that the oil represents nearly 8 per cent of the national wealth employed in production and the mining-metallurgical industry only 4.4 per cent. I doubt whether these statistics are more than approximate, but they show what the Mexican government officially thinks the comparative value of the two industries to be.

But the question of oil, to the Mexican people, was only partly an economic matter. It was also emotional, involving both race and nationality. The emotional roots go back to the Conquest, when the Spanish, in the shadow of the legend of Quetzalcoatl, brought the whips of slavery to a proud race and subjected them to the scorn that the white skin feels for the brown. The resentment of the enslaved Indian against conscienceless masters, of the *mestizo*, forced completely out of the racial group of the brown mother-stock to occupy the lowest rank within the civilization of the white blood, the resentment of the creole, for centuries held in an inferior legal position and looked down on as "colonials," "rustics" and "Americanos"—all this, bred into Mexican psychology during the long colonial period, was turned against other foreigners, the Americans and the English who, replacing the Spanish as economic masters, took also their attitude of social superiority. Against the Americans, there was also the smoldering resentment left over from defeat in war and the loss of half the national territory. Compound this with the immediate resent-

ment of the poor and disinherited, bound to a rigid system from which there was no escape, at sight of the wealth and privilege of the resident company officials . . . and you wonder that all the Americans lost was their oil.

Here is the oil companies' story (I quote the Standard Oil booklet, *The Fine Art of Squeezing*):

"The American pioneers who explored for oil in Mexico forty years ago found that the Mexican landowners were glad to sell or lease their lands for prices far in excess of their agricultural sales or rental values. Few of the landowners believed that the prospectors could make money to equal their own profits. For several years the Mexicans watched these Americans going into unhealthy jungles and drilling wells which produced little or no oil. The Mexican attitude was one of incredulity and indifference. The Americans were moved by optimism and tireless perseverance. . . .

"These were hard and thankless years for the oil pioneers. Millions of dollars were poured into Mexico with no returns. Sickness dogged the oil operators at every step. The difficulties that hampered the work were almost insurmountable. There was no trained labor to be hired. The Mexican wilderness was forbidding. Communications were bad or non-existent. The financiers in the United States lost heart and interest. Mexican officials insisted there were no oil deposits of any value in Mexico.

"But the Americans continued to struggle and explore. In time their faith was justified. They found oil—and good oil—but realized that they could only turn it into money if they could finance extensive storage and transportation facilities, and could manage to sell it abroad in competition with oils from other countries. It followed that additional financial backing . . . many millions of dollars—had to be found. American and other foreign capital hesitated to go into Mexico on a large scale, however, unless there could be ample assurance that the Mexican government would protect it and insure fair play. Such assurances were forthcoming. . . . [from Díaz.]

"As soon as it became apparent, however, that the Americans had struck oil in a big way, the incredulity of the Mexican politicians gave way to envy, and indifference was transmuted into cupidity. The temptation to appropriate what foreign ingenuity, energy and capital were developing in Mexico proved irresistible. Slowly but surely the Mexican government reached out its fingers and began to squeeze . . .

"For ten years the oil industry battled against disheartening odds. Many companies went into bankruptcy. Revolution overran Mexico and with it came raids on the oil properties by armed bands, forced loans, double taxation, the forced quartering of troops at the expense of the companies and direct interference with operations. The oil companies . . . were at the mercy of the revolutionists. It was all they could do to prevent their properties from being destroyed.

"But their patience bore fruit. By 1915, there was no longer doubt that Mexico could become a great oil-producing nation. . . . Production increased and as it showed signs of becoming substantial, Mexican politicians once more reached out their hands to take over what the foreigners had made productive."

The picture of their sufferings in the Revolution would be more affecting if you could forget the part that Henry Lane Wilson and the American capitalists played in Madero's fall and Mexico's plunge into chaos.

Now hear the Mexican side. I quote the speech in which Lázaro Cárdenas announced expropriation to the nation:

"We've heard till we tired of it that the petroleum industry brought into the country vast capital for its development. This is an exaggerated idea. For many years, during the greater part of their existence, the oil companies have enjoyed great privileges that favored their development and expansion. They have had tax exemptions and innumerable prerogatives and these, combined with the prodigious productivity of the oil wells that the nation gave them concessions to—often against its will and

against public interest—comprise in truth, almost all this capital that they talk about.

“The potential riches of the nation; native labor paid meager wages; exemption from taxes; economic privileges and governmental patronage; these are the factors that entered into the rapid upward surge of the oil industry in Mexico.

“Let us examine the social policies of the companies. In how many towns near the oil fields is there a hospital or a school or a social center or a storage tank or filtering plant for water, or a playing field or an electric light plant, even one operated by the many millions of cubic meters of gas that oil production wastes?

“In what oil center, on the other hand, is there not a private police force to safeguard interests that are private, egotistical and sometimes illegal? About these groups, some authorized by the government and some not, there are many stories of attacks, of abuses and of murders, always in the interest of the oil companies.

“Who doesn’t know the irritating discriminations that exist in the petroleum camps? Conveniences for the foreign personnel; for the native, miserable and unhealthful living conditions. Refrigeration and protection against insects for the first, indifference and neglect—the medical services and medicines are always grudged—for the latter. Low pay, hard and exhausting work for our people.

“Another great disadvantage that has arisen with the growth of the antisocial oil companies has been even more harmful than all I have mentioned: their persistent and wrongful intervention in our national politics.

“Nobody doubts nowadays that the companies maintained strong rebel bands that fought against the constituted govern-

ment in the Huasteca Veracruzana and the Isthmus of Tehuantepec from 1917 till 1920. Everybody knows that before then and since, even in our time, the oil companies have encouraged rebellious ambitions. . . . They have had money, arms and munitions for rebellion. Money for the anti-patriotic press that defends them. Money to enrich their adherents. But for the progress of the country, for a better balance through just compensation to labor, for the betterment of health conditions where they themselves work or to salvage the natural gases that result from oil production, there is no money, no economic capacity . . . nor will they take the money from their earnings."

What the oil companies said was substantially true, but as a defense or justification of their actions in Mexico in 1938, it was living in the past.

Cárdenas obviously underrated the contribution of American capital and technical skill to the development of the industry, but the rest of what he said was undeniably true and I think his attitude expressed fairly well what all Mexicans and most disinterested observers in the United States felt about the matter. This does not mean, of course, that there was general agreement that his cure for the situation was the best one.

The revolt against the economic domination of the foreign capitalists who controlled the production of mineral wealth, the factories and the public utilities of Mexico was as strong an impulse of the Mexican Revolution of 1910 as was the desire for land. Their approach to this problem, which was to them one of getting control of sources of Mexican wealth for the Mexican people, was colored by two factors: first, the Mexican people, who had never been more than laborers in the vineyard, had not been able to accumulate national wealth enough to buy out their foreign masters, and second, to their way of thinking,

these foreign masters, direct descendants of the Conquerors, and, as a class, enriched for centuries at the expense of the native, deserved no compensation. It is a point of view that you can easily understand once you have grasped the fact of the Conquest and its enduring consequences.

With strong governments protecting the English and American capitalists, the Revolution was not able to expel them forthwith as the creoles of the Independence had expelled the Spanish in 1827. The capitalistic interests were able to bring down the first Revolutionary government, that of Madero, and it is doubtful if Carranza would have been permitted to set up another if Huerta had not flirted too openly with Germany, also making a play for Mexican oil. The cause of Huerta's fall from favor was his refusal to make amends for an alleged insult to the American flag, but it was the report of the approach of the German ship *Ypiranga* bringing him arms and ammunitions that caused President Wilson to tell Secretary Daniels to have the United States Navy "take Vera Cruz at once."

Carranza, the hardheaded old *Primer Jefe*, who was not above considering German support as a counterbalance to the power of the United States government or of listening to propositions to lead a German-financed war to get back Texas and California (as the Zimmermann notes implied), laid the groundwork for an attack on foreign control of the newest, richest and most promising of the mineral products, oil, by including in the Constitution of 1917 the famous Article 27. The American State Department, as soon as the Constitution was set up, began to protest that nationalization of the subsoil would, if applied to existing petroleum rights, constitute confiscation. Carranza, checked in this direction, issued a series of decrees governing the operation of the petroleum industry.

Permission to drill had to be obtained from the government, and certain conditions had to be fulfilled before this permission would be granted. In practice, this law prevented the companies from drilling on their own ground. Another law made it possible for a third party to "denounce" oil lands on which no drilling or "positive acts" of development had been undertaken; the lands were then expropriated and turned over to the denouncers. Heavy taxes were also imposed. The total effect of these laws, if consistently carried out, would have been to bring the expansion of the oil industry in Mexico to a full stop. The State Department of the United States neutralized these measures somewhat by consistent diplomatic protest.

Obregón's government came to power through revolution and he was anxious for recognition from the United States; he realized, however, that no Revolutionary government in Mexico could stand if it made an open "sell-out" to foreign capital and he refused to make a previous agreement to obtain the desired recognition. What he did was to suspend the Carranza decrees through a change of government policy . . . and recognition followed. By Supreme Court decision and through repeated statements in diplomatic correspondence, the Obregón government assured the Americans that Article 27 would not be applied retroactively. In 1923, it was expressly agreed (at the Bucareli conference) that no American-owned properties could be expropriated without immediate payment in cash on the basis of a just evaluation of the properties at the time of expropriation.

Calles, who started his administration as a vigorous Revolutionary reformer, tried a new tack. He sought to obtain the future elimination of the foreign oil interests by passing a law compelling the oil companies to exchange their titles and leases for "confirmatory concessions" that would expire at the end of

fifty years. This move, affecting the fundamental issue of ownership, that on which the American companies were basing their whole defense, was vigorously protested as "confiscatory" in a series of notes sent by Secretary Kellogg. Foreign capital, very understandably, grew wary of Mexico. Finally Morrow was sent, first as unofficial, then as official ambassador, and his influence on Calles brought about a change in policy. The Calles Petroleum Law was emasculated by amendment and the Supreme Court, now friendly, handed down a series of favorable decisions.

As the Standard Oil Company's official history of the long disputes says somewhat pathetically: "It was naturally assumed that the matter had thus been finally settled. On the strength of this justified assumption, large sums of American and European money were invested in Mexico after 1927."

In 1932, some of this money was strongly rumored to have flowed back across the border in the form of a \$5,000,000 slush fund that grateful *callista* millionaires made up at Calles' direction and sent to aid the staggering Landon cause.

Under Cárdenas, when the attack on the oil companies materialized again, as it was bound to do, it apparently came from another direction, from the people themselves. To all appearances it was as if the Mexican nation had decided, "Well, since these foreign governments won't let us take back our oil, at least we'll make the companies divide up better." And since this was a purely domestic matter, a difference between employer and employee, the Mexican government, which had formally and repeatedly forsworn all course of action that could be construed as alienating the companies' property rights, was the natural referee in the matter.

It is interesting to note the sequence of events. Labor's strike

offensive against foreign-owned companies in which Calles and the *callistas* had a direct and indirect interest began in the spring of 1935 and the situation reached its crisis on June 13th, when Cárdenas openly declared himself in favor of labor. The organization of the Proletarian Defense Committee, labor's first united front, followed and the test of strength with the *callistas* was on. By the latter part of 1935 Cárdenas and labor had tried their wings; on December 22nd he was able to assure the people of Mexico that the United States would not interfere. He followed this up by kicking out Calles and his *camarilla*, Wall Street's darlings. This same year, he created the official government oil company, *Petróleos Mexicanos*, which began sinking wells on creek and riverbanks, property of the nation, in the foreign-owned oil fields. He also canceled here and there small concessions to public lands that had been given to foreign companies by Díaz. The oil companies were alarmed, but were soothed with the assurance that their fee titles and leases obtained from private owners would not be touched.

In February 1936, when the CTM was formed, the workers of the oil industry entered as a well-organized unit. On November 3, 1936, the oil workers presented demands for a new labor contract; no one will deny that the cost of living was going up and that they needed higher wages. On November 23rd, Cárdenas had the Constitution amended to permit the expropriation of private property for "public utility" and in certain circumstances constituting an emergency of national proportions. Under this law it was provided that payment for expropriated properties could be extended over a period of ten years; this, of course, provided legal background for the shelving of the principle of immediate cash payment agreed on at the Bucareli conference in 1923.

The general consensus of opinion is that the original demands of the oil unions were excessive. Whether or not the wage increases asked for were "within the industry's capacity to pay" depends entirely on whether you accept the figures of the oil companies or those of the unions. The companies claimed that operating costs would be increased 300 per cent under the new contract; the unions admitted that it would involve an increase, to them a justified one, of 133 per cent. Some of the clauses of the new contract were patently absurd, such as the one obligating the oil companies to provide the workers with first-class transportation to and from any vacation spot they might choose. But even more serious were the conditions touching management. Among other things, the oil workers stipulated that approximately half the positions in management should be filled by the union, that promotions were to be automatic, and that no worker could be moved from one position within the plant or field organization to another without the consent of the union. You don't have to be an economist to understand that to introduce into the management of an industry a hostile element responsible only to itself, men whose racial and class interests were at the time in conflict with those of the owners of the industry, was against all common sense; no business could be run under such conditions.

The seventeen companies said the demands were exorbitant; the unions announced a strike.

Cárdenas emerged from the background in the role of peace-maker. The strike was suspended; conferences were begun. They lasted till May 1937 and at that time only one twelfth of the clauses had been agreed on. The unions decided to strike; the dispute became a "conflict of an economic order"; this meant that the Labor Board of Arbitration and Conciliation

was to decide the matter on the basis of findings by a government-appointed committee of experts.

The special conditions of Mexican politics cause people to change their political coats so often that any individual's position has to be strictly qualified in time as well as in space. (If you want to be fair you have to qualify it also by point of view, which takes you out of the fourth and into the higher dimensions—and makes you understand why it is axiomatic that if you can keep your head in Mexican politics for a year you can keep it anywhere for the rest of your life.) So let me say that *at that time*, Professor Jesús Silva Herzog, the man who headed this committee of experts, was, if you sympathized with the oil companies, a flaming radical, a communist, no less; if you were for Cárdenas and labor, he was an advanced thinker and Mexico's foremost economist. If you were neutral—but nobody was.

While this committee was making hay with the companies' books and records, Cárdenas quietly granted an enormous concession in the highly productive new Poza Rica oil fields to the British-owned Aguila Oil Company. It was well calculated to break the oil companies' solid front, but it did not, a circumstance that may have been the underlying cause of the extreme bitterness that characterized all subsequent relations between Cárdenas and the British. At this stage of the game, Cárdenas canceled a few more concessions, including a large one that Papa Díaz had given Standard Oil; he also had laws passed providing that the official company, nicknamed Pemex, should take over holdings to which leases and concessions were expiring. The foreign companies protested.

His aim was only to create a national reserve, Cárdenas told them (March 15, 1937); there would be no expropriation.

Amid charge and countercharge by the oil companies' and

the labor unions' propaganda machines, the dispute dragged on. Bitterness grew; anti-American and especially anti-British feeling increased. Leon Trotsky afterwards publicly stated that German agents helped to fan this feeling and promised to publish documentary proof of it. Trotsky was usually very well informed.

The committee of experts, after some months of work, closed their investigation and the Labor Board permitted themselves a note of *opera bouffe*: they flung Professor Silva Herzog's 900,000-word report at the recalcitrant oil companies and gave them three days to answer it.

In the new award, wage and benefit demands were decreased (the two sides finally came within \$500,000 of agreeing on this question); but demands for participation in management were greater. Assistants to department heads were to be chosen from union ranks; foreign technicians were to train Mexican assistants, who would replace them after three years; furthermore, it was provided that any executive against whom three union members lodged a formal complaint should be discharged.

The companies said they could not meet the terms: they took the matter to the Mexican courts.

Lombardo Toledano, one of the most intuitive men in Mexican politics, had a premonition that the Mexican Supreme Court would decide in favor of the workers. On February 22, 1938, he expressed this conviction to the General Congress of the CTM, then in session in Mexico City, in a speech in which he warned that the nation might be forced to take over the oil industry in order to maintain production. He said in addition that international fascism would probably make common cause with the Mexican reaction to start an armed rebellion under

Cedillo's leadership. Since Germany and England were at that time anything but friends, and Poza Rica, which would be included in the properties taken over, was one of the latter's most important sources of oil, Toledano's reasoning seems a bit confused, but he is a wonderful orator and Cedillo, following Garrido Canábal's expulsion, undoubtedly was the strong man of the moment.

As he suspected, the Supreme Court did decide in favor of the workers, on March 1, 1938. The oil companies, disposed to fight it out to the last injunction, appealed this decision. It was again confirmed and they were ordered to comply.

The government's story is that they refused to obey this final order; the oil companies say that they merely stated their inability to meet the terms. You can get documentary evidence that can be construed either way. Authoritative sources in Mexico say, off the record, that the companies did take the attitude, privately, that they would not obey an adverse ruling, but that only a few days before the expropriations they realized the seriousness of the situation and offered to yield their position—only to find that the government considered it "too late."

While the companies were still balking, the labor unions petitioned the Labor Board to declare them "*en rebeldía*" and this was done on March 18, 1938.

That same day Cárdenas, on his own responsibility, announced expropriation.

The magazine *Hoy*, in its issue of January 20, 1940, published what purported to be a facsimile of a note that Cárdenas sent on March 10, 1938, to General Francisco Múgica, Secretary of Communications in his cabinet and one of his oldest friends. This note gave instructions for preparation of the famous 18th of March speech, as follows:

"General Múgica:

"Prepare—

"A manifesto which will reach the heart-strings of all the people, which will make them understand the historical moment through which the nation is passing and the importance of the step that is being taken in defense of the nation's dignity.

"Make a story, besides, out of the points contained in the memorandum that I left you, telling how the Governments of the Revolution, not only ours but previous ones, have had great consideration for the oil companies, in spite of the provisions of the law regulating concessions, in order not to create conflicts, but that now, since the companies themselves have caused a conflict *by their disobedience* to the highest court of Mexico, the people should take over the oil industry to make the law respected.

"Let's say that the State, in making use of the expropriations law, does so because it is obliged to do so; let the industries existing in the country know that the present government wishes to continue counting on the coöperation of private capital whether it be national or foreign.

"Affectionately,

(Signed)

"Lázaro Cárdenas."

(The Múgica-Cárdenas friendship afterwards cooled; Múgica developed presidential ambitions.) The oil companies claim that this note was written before their final statement of their inability to comply with the labor decision.

The Mexican public received the oil expropriations with wild-est enthusiasm. They did not need Cárdenas to tell them that it was a momentous event, a date in history for which the Mexican nation had been longing for a century; to them it was the second, the economic independence, almost the reconquest. At last they were to be free—free at last to use and dispose of the fabulous wealth of the country's horn of plenty. To describe Mexico there was once coined the vivid phrase, "a beggar sit-

ting on a treasure chest. . . ." The beggar, unseated from the treasure chest by foreigners come to loot it, had risen from his lethargy, driven out the interloper and now would dip eager hands into the treasure.

There was a gigantic victory celebration in Mexico City on March 26th, a day of apotheosis for Cárdenas. Over two hundred thousand people paraded through the streets and jammed into the Zócalo to join in singing triumphant pæans, the Mexican National Anthem and the Internationale. Cárdenas, after a tremendous ovation from the people, announced an internal loan to pay for expropriations.

Pay for it. . . ? Of course they could. Committees were organized, politicians gave with much ostentation, the white-collar class and the workers gave generously from their meager pay, cabinet members' wives looked in the cellar for old vases or something of the kind to give, farmers brought in chickens and eggs, vegetables, a pig if they had one, to swell the fund being collected at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*, the opera house, Díaz' charming old Victorian folly. The amount collected has never been announced by the Mexican government, but it was, of course, far short of the 100,000,000-peso goal that had been set. A plan to float a 50,000,000-peso internal loan also failed.

According to the theory of Article 27, the subsoil belonged to the nation; therefore only the plants, refineries, machinery, the surface properties, of the oil companies were to be paid for. The American companies, protesting Article 27 every step of the way, set a value of \$450,000,000 on their properties. The Mexican government again called in Professor Silva Herzog, their financial expert, and after diving into the companies' books for another look he came out with the discovery that they owed large sums for back taxes and compensation to workers

under the labor laws. Offsetting this debt against the sum claimed in payment by the companies, the total amount due the companies was reduced to around 50,000,000 pesos—only \$10,000,000 with the peso at five to one. The comedian Cantinflas, Mexico's Charlie Chaplin, once had a political skit in which it turned out the companies were owing the government. . . .

The British suffered the greater loss—the Poza Rica field is potentially the second largest in the world—and their government began diplomatic protest as soon as the expropriations decree went into effect. On May 11th, a note was sent pointing out that Mexico was in arrears in payment on claims arising from damages to British property in the period 1910-1920, that its combined public external debt and railroad debt amounted to \$483,000,000 in principal and \$493,000,000 in unpaid interest, that the Mexican government owed an internal debt of 285,000,000 pesos, plus the value of the 18,000,000 hectares of expropriated lands as yet to be paid for. . . .

"His Majesty's government [said the note] . . . cannot but regard failure of the Mexican government to discharge even their existing obligations as in itself rendering unjustified an expropriation, an essential condition of the validity of which would be the payment of full and adequate compensation, amounting in this case (the oil expropriations) to a very large sum.

"My government must in any case request the immediate payment of the sum of 370,962.71 pesos which fell due on the 1st January last."

Mexico sent a check for the sum of 370,962.71 pesos and broke off diplomatic relations.

Cárdenas, the former printer's devil, had come far since the days of Jiquilpan. After all, you can count on your fingers the

men who have ever been in a position to slap the British Empire in the face—and get away with it.

The American government at first took the attitude that the expropriation was only “one of a long series of incidents of this character” and therefore raised no new problem. However, in a statement made on March 30, 1938, Secretary Hull pointed out that:

“ . . . in accordance with every principle of international law, of comity between nations and of equity, the properties of its nationals so expropriated are required to be paid for by compensation representing fair, assured and effective value to the nationals from whom these properties were taken.”

The Mexicans, promising to pay, moved in on the oil industry; union leaders resigned to take executive positions at salaries five and six times greater than they had been making; the workers got something of a wage increase, a great deal less than they had demanded of the companies, of course, but their personal satisfaction in ownership was supposed to offset that. Mexico set itself up in the oil business.

In July, 1938, there appeared a rift in the lute: Secretary Hull revived the question of payments due for lands expropriated under the agrarian program—something over \$111,000,000—and the Mexicans saw in it a preliminary maneuver to action on the oil question. As a series of notes was exchanged, the American tone grew firmer. Said Secretary Hull:

“The taking of property without compensation is not expropriation. It is confiscation. It is no less confiscation because there may be an expressed intent to pay at some time in the future.”

These were sharp words to the Mexicans, especially to Cárdenas, who had been so sure that the American government

would not interfere. He was in a position from which he could not retreat; he could neither pay for the expropriated properties nor return them. With the United States government, that had come to the rescue of Mexico late in 1937 with its silver purchase policy, in a position to bring down the tottering financial structure of his government almost at a day's notice, Cárdenas was indeed in as precarious a position as a Mexican politician—or statesman, if you consider that he had now moved into the higher rank—had ever found himself in. His exterior support, the tolerance of the Roosevelt administration, threatened to slide out from under him.

But Cárdenas had grown up in the Revolution. He had seen Carranza openly defy a supporting United States government on a question of national sovereignty. He had seen Carranza, Zapata, Villa, all the warring factions of the Revolution, unite in protest when United States Marines, attacking their common enemy, Huerta, took Vera Cruz. He had seen Obregón, his back against the wall of national sovereignty, refuse to knuckle under when the Harding administration sent warships to Mexican waters to protect the interests of the oil companies. What is most important of all, he had seen how, when Obregón refused to send Mexican representatives to the Fifth Pan-American conference (Santiago, Chile, January, 1923), pro-Mexican representatives of other South American countries had created anti-American disturbances and scuttled the conference. And this had been during the era of the Big Stick, before the inception of the Good Neighbor policy.

Cárdenas' method in the face of a serious threat was always to take the bold course; and here the way was well prepared for him. It would have been very easy for him to take the anti-American feeling already aroused against the oil companies,

widen its scope to include the United States government and carry the issue to Latin America. There was another Pan-American conference in the offing . . . to be held at Lima from December 9 to December 27, 1938.

It is significant that just about this time Lombardo Toledano, who as organizer and labor leader had worked with Cárdenas every step of the way in the fight against the *callistas*, who had been field marshal and right-hand man in the battle against the oil companies, now started pushing the organization of a Pan-American Labor Federation. On September 1, 1938, the *Confederación de Trabajadores de la América-Latina* was organized and Toledano was elected to the directing post of general secretary, and Mexico City was designated general headquarters. Thus organized labor of Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Costa Rica and Uruguay followed Mexico's leadership in forming a Latin-, not a Pan-American, labor group. Said their declaration of principles, as stated in the preamble to their constitution: "We declare that the principal task of the working class of Latin America consists in achieving the full economic and political autonomy of the Latin-American nations. . . ."

Unofficial Cárdenas spokesmen began to sound a warning note in reference to the coming Pan-American conference. Andrés Molina Enríquez, a man who more than any other, perhaps, has expressed in his writings the fundamental philosophy of the Mexican Agrarian Revolution, wrote thus (I quote my translation as published in the *Atlantic Monthly*):

"In order to understand clearly the position of Mexico in this dispute it is necessary to take a detached position, in order to get the broadest possible view of things; and we must have, at the same time, a clear vision of the future: the note Mexico

sent in answer to the intimations of the first note of Mr. Hull has hit center. Indeed, the sound doctrine that every foreigner who goes to a country not his own ought to be subject to the same advantages and risks as are the sons of that country, without being able to ask for or get more, will prevail by the very force of its rightness and will undo the framework of all the imperialisms. The fear that such a doctrine should be formulated and promulgated—a fear that seems to have inspired the notes of Mr. Hull—is to a certain extent justified, because the United States would be helpless against the concerted action of the nations of the Western Hemisphere all following Mexico's example at once. And it is clearly to be seen, as by the light of noon, that when all the nations of the continent deliberately do what Mexico has been bound to do in the application of Article 27 of its Constitution, the continent will feel an immense relief, and, the claws of imperialism once withdrawn, its various nationalities will rise up and grow with all their potential force in expansion.

"I believe that President Cárdenas bears in his hands a standard for the continent far more real and more liberating than that of the 'good neighbor' policy. . . ."

Let's see what happened at Lima.

Secretary Hull sounded the keynote of the American hopes for the conference in his opening address. An ominous threat had fallen across our continent, he said. In the face of this (I quote the text of his speech as reported in the *New York Times*, December 11, 1938):

" . . . there must not be a shadow of a doubt anywhere as to the determination of the American nations not to permit the invasion of this hemisphere by the armed forces of any power or any possible combination of powers."

He expressed the determination of the American nations to resist either a military or an ideological invasion of the Western Hemisphere. Hemispheric solidarity . . . that was his interest at Lima.

At the Buenos Aires Conference in 1936, a project under which all the nations of the Americas should agree not "to employ armed force or to resort to diplomatic intervention for the collection of public or contractual debts or to support claims of an exclusively pecuniary origin," had failed of approval.

This was now brought forward by the Commission of Experts, and, after inclusion of a provision that either creditor or debtor, in event of failure to settle claims by local remedies and diplomatic negotiations, might demand and obtain arbitration of the issue of "unjustified repudiation or violation of contract, denial of justice or infraction of a generally recognized international duty," the United States signed.

Mexico and the Argentine both introduced projects under which the American governments should renounce diplomatic intervention on behalf of their nationals who had renounced their right to diplomatic protection, but they did not press their points and this highly explosive question was referred to the Commission of Experts for study. This, of course, constituted shelving.

Mexico, by this action, made a threat but withdrew it.

With the Central American and West Indian republics, Panama, Colombia and Venezuela, Mexico supported Secretary Hull's program of resistance to the military or ideological invasion from nazi-fascist powers, in the face of dissent from a bloc headed by the Argentine and including Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia. It thus showed a willingness to fall in with our hemispheric solidarity idea.

For the United States, the conference marked a forward step toward inter-American good will; for the Latin-American countries, especially Mexico, it was a milestone marking confirmation of the new United States' policy of nonintervention.

In the meanwhile, direct or indirect pressure for a settlement of the oil expropriations on the companies' terms—the one thing the Cárdenas government feared most—did not materialize from Washington. If there was pressure, it was on the oil companies, for a change in their attitude was noticeable after the conference. In the spring of 1939, Donald Richberg was sent to Mexico City with a proposition under which they offered to comply with the labor award and invest large capital sums in Mexico's oil industry on condition of return of the oil properties under a fifty-year lease. This offer was refused.

The outcome of the diplomatic maneuvering that followed the oil expropriations was to establish definitely that government in Mexico had broadened its base of exterior support: the influence of private American financial interests with the United States government could now be counterbalanced by Mexico's influence with the nations of Latin America. Our governmental policy toward Mexico was to be dictated by consideration of what was best for national interests as a whole in the face of the nazi-fascist threat in the Western Hemisphere.

VII

THE CÁRDENAS REVOLUTION: RESULTS

THE expropriation of Mexican oil was, when you analyse it, as bold and brilliant a political coup as has been brought off in modern politics. Consider the situation for a moment: Mexico, without money, friends or armaments, a country that had for a century been the playground of the financial interests of two of the most powerful nations on earth, this little nation, the beggar not strong enough to lift the lid of its own treasure chest, suddenly rose up and unceremoniously kicked out—that's the only expression that really fits it—the powerful American and the doubly powerful British oil interests. It was more than a case of the mouse defying the cat, it was the mouse cracking the two neighborhood champions' heads together.

Whatever the ultimate total effect of expropriations may be, the immediate economic effect was disastrous, and I have seen Cárdenas' sincerest admirers shake their heads and wonder how on earth he could have "rushed into" a move of such tremendous importance without considering the consequences. The answer is, of course, that he did consider them, shrewdly, but that he miscalculated . . . he underestimated the British Navy, a mistake that other nations' strong men have made from time to time.

Toledano, of all the men around Cárdenas, was closest to him at that time, and in the speech made to the CTM on Febru-

ary 22, 1938, when he correctly foretold that the Mexican Supreme Court would decide against the companies, he discussed the matter frankly (I quote the translation of the *Universidad Obrera*, Toledano's "University"):

"After the sentence, what is going to happen? What will take place after the decision of the Supreme Court? The time will come, comrades, it seems inevitable, when the oil companies will have to be replaced by the representatives of the State and of the Mexican workers to maintain oil production. We are ready to assume the technical, economic, legal, moral and historic responsibility which is the privilege of a country of free men.

"But our attitude (though there can be no other, there is no other possible for us) may bring grave consequences to the country. The greater part of the oil produced by the American-controlled wells is consumed in Mexico; but most of the oil produced by the wells in the hands of the English companies is exported. To whom shall we sell the oil if the two great international trusts, Standard Oil and Royal Dutch Shell, who are also the owners of all the fleets of oil tankers, make the disposal of Mexican oil more difficult? Moreover, once the enterprises come into the hands of the government and the workers, what other means will the oil imperialists employ to sharpen the artificial crisis they have created and which is just now beginning? Will there not be certain acts of sabotage to deprive the Federal Treasury of resources? Of course they will resort to sabotage and of course the national capitalist class will aid the imperialist maneuver, and everywhere, comrades, in every part of the country where there exists a tribune of reaction, or of capitalism, or of imperialism, you will hear this basic argument: 'A handful of men, twenty-five thousand oil workers, have

brought all Mexico to disaster. The selfishness of the oil workers! What greed! What meanness! Twenty-five thousand men, out of a total of sixteen million inhabitants, are placing the country in peril of death solely out of a selfish desire to secure greater personal advantages when they already live well and are the spoiled darlings of industry. . . .’

“The time may come when the Government will be obliged to reduce its budget and cut down its public works, throwing many thousands of workers out of employment; among many groups of the population a palpable confusion may be produced, and it is possible that certain groups already known to us, such as those of Saturnino Cedillo and others, may launch their armed uprising in connivance with imperialism and international fascism and Mexican reaction, in an attempt to overthrow the Government and install a regime of fascist oppression that would hand over the national autonomy to the imperialists and destroy the finest conquests and triumphs of the Mexican revolution.

“All this may occur. On the other hand, nothing may happen. *English capitalism cannot really believe that in a moment of need it will be able to dispose as it pleases of its petroleum in the Orient, in Persia, in Iraq. The Mediterranean is threatened;* it is due only to the cowardice of the English Tories and the lack of class-consciousness of the great working masses that the aggressions of international fascism against the interests of the British people have so long been tolerated. And even though the English government were to unite with those of Germany and Italy, that circumstance in itself would not end the rivalry between these imperialisms *or guarantee that in a crisis the Mediterranean would not be fascism’s ‘Mare Nostrum’* or that the oil of the Orient would get through to England. *But Mexican*

oil can always get through to England; the United States and England will struggle together, for they have common interests to defend. Will the English dare abandon Mexico and continue their rearmament and war-industries program relying entirely on the Eastern petroleum supply threatened by Italy?" (Italics mine.)

Disposal of the products of the American-owned wells was no problem: the Mexicans themselves used most of this oil. The key was Poza Rica, the richness of which the British had been given a taste of through the Cárdenas concession of 1937. As Mexican reasoning ran (I quote the officially approved Weyl biography):

"In the spring of 1938, war between the Rome-Berlin axis and the democracies appeared more than likely. In the event of such a conflict Britain knew that she would face the possibility of an oil crisis. *Her properties in Mesopotamia would be worthless, with Italian destroyers and submarines harassing and sinking merchant shipping in the Mediterranean.* Russian oil yielded little surplus for export and the Rumanian fields were within the ambit of German military control. Since tanker fleets in submarine-infested waters must be convoyed, the impracticability of relying on Far Eastern oil was obvious. There remained only the Venezuelan, Mexican and United States fields, and of these Poza Rica was potentially most important. A war-harassed England would prefer not to pay cash for United States oil if the same product would be had for half the cost from British-controlled properties in Mexico." (Italics mine.)

This accurately reflects the official view of the moment. Both Toledano and the Weyls stress Italy's threat to England's Mediterranean life-line and if you remember, the latter part of 1937 and the spring of 1938 was the time when the fable of

Italian naval strength was at its apogee. The Italians were supposed to have something new and especially deadly up their sleeve. One story that was circulated in Europe and the United States as well as in Mexico was that a fleet of Italian torpedo boats had crossed in front of a squadron of British warships approaching Malta, touched African shores and recrossed their path in so short a time that the British Navy turned pale. (In 1940 in Mexico they were calling the Italian Navy "Hitler's secret weapon.")

The Mexicans thought their oil was indispensable to the British Navy. Furthermore, they thought that the English government would not "dare" risk its falling into other hands. They knew that both English and American companies were selling oil to Italy, oil from refineries at Aruba and Curaçao, but they were looking ahead, figuring neatly that the time would come when this would be stopped and the fascist powers would have to look elsewhere for oil. Then control of Poza Rica would be vital.

The closing paragraph of Cárdenas' March 18th expropriations speech is highly significant. Said Cárdenas (this is the official translation by the *Universidad Obrera*):

"And finally, as the fear may arise among the interests now hotly disputing in the field of international affairs that a deviation of raw materials fundamentally necessary to the struggle in which the most powerful nations are engaged might result from the consummation of this act of national sovereignty and dignity, we wish to state that our petroleum production will not depart a single inch from the moral solidarity maintained by Mexico with the democratic nations, whom we wish to assure that the expropriation now decreed has as its only purpose the elimination of hindrances created by groups who do not under-

stand the evolutionary needs of all peoples and who would themselves have no compunction in selling Mexican oil to the highest bidder, without taking into account the consequences of such action to the popular masses and the nations in conflict."

In plainer English: If England is afraid that we've expropriated oil in order to be able to sell it to Germany and Italy, let her fears be at rest, for we only took the step to get rid of the oil companies and we're perfectly willing to do business with the democratic governments directly.

Toledano revealed the official hopes and Cárdenas extended a direct invitation—one involving a veiled threat, perhaps—for England to keep on buying expropriated oil.

But the English were not so concerned about the Italian Navy as the Mexicans were. British sea power had not come so low that British prestige could be trampled on by Mexico with impunity. Britain demanded that the expropriations be invalidated since Mexico had not paid previous obligations and could not pay for oil, and Mexico broke off diplomatic relations with the reminder that not all the big nations paid their debts promptly. Both Britain and France, Britain's ally, were lost as markets for Mexican oil.

American and British companies had begun to withdraw their funds from Mexico some time before expropriations and the peso had reacted accordingly. After expropriations British, American, French, Spanish and Mexican capital fled the country, and the Bank of Mexico, in no position to sustain the rate of exchange at the 3.60 level, cut the peso loose from its moorings. It started sinking and soon was quoted at five to the dollar. This meant that five pesos had to be sent out of the country

to pay for every article that had previously cost three and six-tenths—and prices started skyward.

Mexico's twenty-five thousand oil workers pitched in and handled production in a way that won praise from all. But with the usual marketing channels cut off, the new government administration had difficulty with sales. The Eastern States Petroleum Company, one of the first American companies that started dealing in expropriated Mexican oil, soon became involved in litigation with Shell, which took the stand that Eastern was marketing oil stolen from them by the Mexican government. Dealers who came in to profit from Mexico's embarrassment by buying Mexican oil at speculators' prices found that marketing the oil involved legal difficulties. Oil gathered in Mexico's storage tanks; American manufacturers of oil machinery and supplies who had sold and were selling to the Standard and other American companies were hesitant to continue supplying the Mexican oil industry and they lost orders that they could have used very well indeed. Other business men, alarmed, withheld credit from Mexican firms. The American share of Mexico's market, already shrinking, shrank further. It was a very unhappy situation.

Especially unhappy was the Mexican government. It had counted on profits from the rich oil industry to span the gap between terra firma and the insecure position that its extensive financing of the land and labor coöperatives and the public works program had brought it to. But Mexican oil was almost a drug on the market.

Salvation appeared in the person of W. R. Davis, an American international financier and speculator who had emerged from various business ventures in South America, Ethiopia,

Scandinavia, England and Germany with many connections in international financial circles, especially those interested in oil. Davis was very well known in Germany, where he owned refining interests. He had lost a small subsidiary company, the Sabalo Transportation Corporation, in expropriations, but did not allow this to disturb his equanimity. After the re-shuffle and the re-deal that followed the nationalization of Mexico's oil industry, he emerged selling the bulk of the nation's export oil to Germany, on a royalty basis.

American newspaper correspondents in foreign countries are the only eyes that the American public has to watch what is going on. The diplomats may keep up for the State Department, but they are in no position to tell what they see to the public at large—it would scarcely be diplomatic. Davis' operations in Mexican oil directly contradicted the Mexican government's public stand of "moral solidarity" with the democratic governments and naturally it wouldn't have made very good reading in the American press. Frank Kluckhohn, of the *New York Times*, began to send dispatches to his paper pointing to Mexico's drift toward an economic alliance with the Axis. . . . Apologists point to the fact that Mexico was "forced" into closer trade relations with Italy and Germany; it is a tenable point of view. It still remains that they earnestly desired to keep it quiet while negotiations were going on and heartily disliked the American newspaper man who told the American public about it. Kluckhohn later became too inquisitive; a story went out that Italian rice planters in Michoacán were being paid for expropriated lands while American nationals were not. The story could not be confirmed, was denied by the government, and Kluckhohn was thirty-three.

Another American newspaper man, Marquis Childs, column-

ist for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, brought down wrath upon his head by publishing, months afterwards, a charge that a United States senator had come to Mexico in the company of W. R. Davis to discuss a deal in Mexican oil *before* expropriations. The senator, Guffey of Pennsylvania, denied the charges with all vigor from the floor of the Senate. Childs sued for libel, but the suit was withdrawn. This charge was revived in the 1940 senatorial campaign in Pennsylvania, when Jay Cooke, running against Guffey, stated publicly that he had proof that Guffey, Davis and a man named Stewart had come to Mexico City to confer with Cárdenas before March 18, 1938.

The Weyl biography, officially approved, quotes Cárdenas as saying, in July 1938:

"We prefer to trade with the United States, but we cannot pay too great a price for this preference. It is also true that greatly increased commerce with Germany might tend to heighten German political influence here. This is something that we take even more seriously than the loss of trade with the United States. In such matters, we need the help of our neighbors, and if our neighbors do not help us, we will have to manage as best we can by ourselves."

This was putting it frankly and if this point of view had been publicized, misunderstanding might have been avoided.

From the date of Hitler's rise to power in Germany, and increasingly through 1936, 1937 and 1938, the Nazis had been waging in Mexico a campaign of economic penetration in which they made use of every means that they knew or could invent to orient Mexico's trade and commerce in their direction. With their aski marks—mentioned specifically by Secretary Hull at Lima—they had introduced a system of government subsidy of export trade that gave American exporters, whose prices were

already higher due to the higher standard of living within the United States, a price competition that it was impossible for them to meet. Not only with price, but with credit terms, with strenuous efforts to please the Mexican wholesaler, retailer and consumer alike, the Germans had for years been enlarging their share of the market, at our expense.

To illustrate: in 1929, the last of the big trade years of the pre-Hitler era, Germany's share of Mexico's imports was 8 per cent, which was about normal for the preceding decade. In 1938, the last year before the barter deals or the naval blockade came into the picture, Mexico was buying 19 per cent of all the goods it purchased abroad from Germany—and since it was buying at low prices, this meant, of course, that a proportionately greater bulk of German merchandise was replacing the goods of other nations in Mexico's consumer-market. During the same period—from 1929 to 1938—the percentage of total imports that Mexico bought from us fell from 69.1 per cent to 57.7 per cent, a direct loss of 11.4 per cent of the whole market and a shrinkage by 16.5 per cent of our share in the market. This effect could only have been achieved through a terrific trade effort in Mexico . . . but about this drive, the American public, whose attention was taken up with oil, knew nothing.

The American man in the street had, I think it is generally conceded, sympathized with the Mexican people on the oil question; they were themselves passing through a period of disillusionment with the capitalistic system as it had been operating in the United States, the more so since it had shown signs of breaking down. But there had been no background or explanation whatever to prepare the American public for the barter deals and when Kluckhohn announced the first one, the trade with Germany, it created a sensation. It is worth noting that

this announcement coincided with the opening of the conference at Lima; also, that it did not cause our diplomatic representation there to lose their heads.

Under the arrangement with Germany, the Mexican government was to receive, in return for oil, heavy machinery for use in the construction of roads and ports and dams, equipment for the oil industry, fittings for irrigation systems, trucks, units for hydro-electric plants, typewriters and office equipment and a certain amount of miscellaneous merchandise. As best it can be estimated, the transaction involved around \$15,000,000. Under the second deal, that with Italy, rayon yarn was to be supplied to Mexico's artificial silk-knitting industry and two ten-thousand-ton tankers were to be built in Italian shipyards for delivery to Mexico. Under the third barter deal, with Japan, rayon yarn was to be swapped for Mexican oil.

W. R. Davis rented tankers and away went Mexico's oil. Early in 1939 Mexico began to receive road machinery, office equipment, trucks, hydro-electric plants, fittings for the oil industry and the lighter merchandise. Rayon from Italy began to come in. Construction was begun on one of the tankers in an Italian shipyard.

The barter deals were a desperate effort on the part of the Cárdenas government to rescue the situation that had been created by oil expropriations, itself a measure that it had been hoped would solve a financial crisis.

The effect was to relieve the Cárdenas government's immediate embarrassment. The machinery and supplies that Germany began shipping early in 1939 enabled them to keep on with their dam and road-building program, considered vital to the success of the agrarian reform. Cheap German goods flowed through Mexican trade channels, some of them sold by

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the government itself, and were a partial palliative for the rising cost of living. It was found that the German fittings could not be installed on the American machinery in use in the oil industry, but that seemed a temporary check. The German machinery was stored and ingenious Mexican mechanics repaired the American installations. The worker-operated rayon industry was easily adjusted to the Italian fount of supply; the tankers were building and they would permit Mexico a measure of independence in the marketing of its oil.

Within a year after expropriations, Mexico's trade and commerce were being rapidly orientated toward Germany and Italy, and you could say that one of the main life-lines of the Cárdenas program, if not of the Mexican nation as a whole, now ran to these powers. When German rapine on the continent finally brought England and France into war against her, it was to have far-reaching effects on Mexico's economy, therefore on Mexico's interior politics—effects that it was probably impossible for Cárdenas to foresee when he expropriated oil.

At the time when the controversy between the oil companies and labor was reaching its climax and it was becoming increasingly evident to those on the inside that Cárdenas and Tolezano were sweeping on toward expropriation, there arose in the minds of some of the men around Cárdenas a doubt as to the wisdom of undertaking such a step when the effects of his other social reforms were being strongly felt in the national economy. One of them was General Francisco Múgica, whose career as a Revolutionary went back to 1913 when, under Madero, he had carried out in his native state of Tamaulipas one of the first of the large-scale land distributions. He was co-author and chief proponent of both the agrarian and labor

clauses of the 1917 Constitution. He was older than Cárdenas, had known him since he was a young officer and called him by his nickname, Trompudo (Snouty), to his face. As a cabinet member—he was Minister of Communications—Múgica expressed his doubts, but his objections were overridden.

Agricultural production in Mexico is divided into two main divisions, the subsistence crops, such as corn, beans, sugar, rice; and the commercial export crops, henequén, bananas, coffee, chicle. The lands producing subsistence crops were the first to be divided into *ejidos* under Cárdenas' land distribution program and production of these crops had shown a progressive decrease from the first harvest. In 1937 and 1938, when the commercial agricultural crops had begun to be affected, a downward trend was noticeable in the yield from these crops.

It would have been a miracle if the Cárdenas program had been a success overnight—it would have been a miracle if what he undertook to do, with the means he had to do it with, had been a success in a generation. After 1937 and increasingly after the harvests of 1938, it began to be seen that all was not going smoothly with the agrarian program, and this, combined with the effect of other government policies instituted by Cárdenas, was to affect the political situation within the country very deeply. In his annual message to Congress near the end of the year 1938, Cárdenas reported that 1,570,507 peasants had received 22,343,501 hectares of land. Statistics have not been compiled to show how many of the people affected were family heads nor what the average size of their families was, but the greater majority of them undoubtedly were heads of families and thus the number of people directly involved in Mexico's land experiment is far greater than these figures indicate.

The causes of the difficulties that the land program encountered during its first few years of life are various. The *New York Journal of Commerce*, in its issue of August 27, 1940, carried an article that summed up what may be called the official version, the one that you get by research in Mexico City. The article said:

"The major results of the agrarian program have been: 1. Some decline in the total production of most major crops.

"In many parts of the republic, peasants had long been accustomed to cultivate plots of two acres or so of their own, in addition to working on the hacienda fields. When given a plot of ten acres or more in the *ejido*, after the expropriation of the haciendas, many peasants have refused to change their mode of life. They would plow and plant only sufficient land to provide the foodstuffs they need, neglecting to cultivate the balance of the land allotted to them so that large fields are found lying idle and unused, thus causing a decline in total output of farm products. Abandonment of farm machinery, which had been in use on many estates, and less efficient cultivation methods have contributed to this result.

"Marketing of agricultural products has fallen off more than production. Numerous peasants, left to their own resources, have consumed a larger portion of their produce, or have refrained from planting as much as formerly when they worked on the hacienda, because they feel they have no need for added cash income. Also there have been complaints that the proceeds of produce marketed through the *ejidos* have failed to get back to the individual peasants in whole or in part.

"In many instances, agricultural improvements and installations put in during the era of large estates are not being maintained. An impartial American observer has found, for example, that the all-important irrigation canals in the rich cotton-growing Laguna district in the north of Mexico are filling with silt. If this is allowed to continue, it is obvious, production on this development will be seriously jeopardized for the future. . . .

"A small start has been made toward the establishment of fa-

cilities for modern agricultural education, but reliable reports . . . show that, on the whole, cultivation is more primitive and less efficient today than was the case five or ten years ago. The experienced direction given by many hacienda managers has been lost. Many of the *ejidos* have been the victim of incompetent political management and the tendency of numerous peons (is) to restrict their cultivation to the production of only the food needed for their own consumption once they are left to their own resources. . . .

"After the distribution of the hacienda lands among the inhabitants of the villages, the peons themselves were profoundly disappointed to find that they did not have absolute control over them. Their age-old craving for land ownership was not satisfied by the very limited and conditional right to land provided by the *ejido*. Above all, they resented being told what to do or to have their ability to cultivate and dispose of the land given them as they wished restricted. Hence, the installation of competent management has been doubly difficult. This attitude of the peasant, in fact, has been a major factor in the mounting and increasingly insistent demand for the dissolution, partial or complete, of the *ejidos* into small individual homesteads."

A detailed history of how each agricultural industry of Mexico was affected by the agrarian reform would fill volumes, for the Cárdenas program introduced new and profoundly disturbing factors into the raising, producing and marketing process of every product of the national soil.

I will give one or two examples by way of illustration. Hog production, for instance, declined under the Six-Year Plan; the causes were intricately bound up with the land distribution. Before large-scale expropriations, most Mexican rural families kept a pig or two that either foraged for themselves or lived off scraps or waste grain. The commercial production of hogs was confined to large farms where food was raised for them on a regular stock-farm basis. When these large farms were broken

up into small units and turned over to the peasants, they tended to continue their habit of raising one or two hogs for family use. The corn shortage that followed land expropriation caused a rise in corn prices, which discouraged those who might have been enterprising enough to undertake hog raising for the market even on a small scale. Another factor introduced by the Six-Year Program was that of better secondary roads. In the old days, when corn was abundant, and roads were so bad the only way it could be taken out was on a mule, a burro or a human back, it was found more profitable and more practical to feed corn to hogs and drive them out to market. With the coming of better roads and higher corn prices, it was more profitable to ship corn out by wagon or truck than to feed it to hogs. This caused a considerable decline in the custom of raising small herds.

Hog production represents the extreme of individual enterprise. Sugar-raising, one of Mexico's largest agricultural industries, represents the other end of the scale, the highly collectivized industry. Sugar lands were expropriated, turned over to peasants who were organized into peasant coöperatives that supplied cane to mills operated by labor coöperatives. I have already mentioned the rivalries that arose between workers and peasants; another factor also discouraged the development of this industry. The sugar that the peasant and worker coöperatives produced was marketed through a semi-official government agency; as prices rose, the government, through this semi-monopoly, kept the price of sugar at a steady level, at the same time encouraging distribution through a system of equalized freight rates on the government-controlled railroads. By this means the consumption of sugar was greatly increased. With the price held steady, there was not sufficient incentive to the

producers to expand their production, and they did not do so. Disturbances within the bosom of the coöperatives have actually led to a decrease in production. (Mexico, in 1940, found itself faced with the certainty that it would have to import sugar for the year 1941.)

One of the observations most frequently repeated is that the *ejidatario* tended to produce only enough for his own use, "feeling that he had no need for additional cash income." . . . This latter statement is by way of apologia; the story that a few frank reporters and the *ejidatarios* themselves tell is that their incentive to produce for a cash income has been strongly discouraged by the fact that they did not, in the end, actually get the cash due them. To their great resentment much of it stuck to bureaucratic fingers. Says Lucio Mendieta y Nuñez, director of the *Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales*, professor of agrarian law in the University of Mexico, director of the *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* and author of "El problema agrario de México" (*Annals of the American Academy of Political Science*, March 1940):

"Both in the Laguna and in the henequén region in the state of Yucatán, there are great deficiencies of *ejido* organization, as is natural, and there are frequent cases of corruption and ineptitude on the part of the bureaucratic organization which the *Banco de Crédito Ejidal* (Bank of *Ejido* Credit) and the Agrarian Department have created to control and direct the collective development of the *ejidos*; but it not correct to judge the excellence of the Agrarian Reform by these transitory circumstances, which will be eliminated under a more strict intervention of the government. . . ."

It is to be hoped that Professor Mendieta y Nuñez' optimism is well founded; it might be pointed out that the organ-

izations created by the Ejidal Bank and the Agrarian Department are part and parcel of the government.

At La Laguna, scene of Mexico's best-publicized experiment in collective farming, the workers' union became involved in difficulties with the officials of the bank, whom they charged with arbitrary methods of management, with political favoritism and with graft. After a congressional investigation (held at the insistence of General Emilio Acosta), the national head of the Ejidal Bank, Carlos M. Peralta, a close friend of Cárdenas, was permitted to take a leave of absence which still continues.

At La Laguna, the questionable manipulation of collectivist finance was not confined to local relationship between *ejidatario* and bank; a confusion also arose in the whole marketing plan. The government fixed the domestic price of cotton at a price that would be advantageous to the Laguna collectivist-farmers, who expected to sell their crop to the Mexican textile industry. But it resulted that private cotton growers sold their crops to the textile industry at these artificially stimulated prices and the Laguna crop had to be stored and marketed for export, at a tremendous loss. The peasants, hungry and disappointed, were quick to cry "Politics!" . . . as indeed it was.

In 1936 and 1937 a political feud raged in Yucatán, where Governor Palomo Valencia, accused by the *cardenistas* of being in league with the *hacendados* who had not yet had their lands taken, led a peasant group in an attack on the administration of the Ejidal Bank. The dispute centered upon the amount of advances the bank should make, and the peasants forced them to set the quota at two and a half pesos a day—about fifty cents with the peso at 5 to 1. The bank returned a deficit of 8,000,000 pesos.

Cárdenas solved the political situation by appearing on the scene with his entourage and distributing the land of the remaining haciendas, about forty per cent of the area in production, to the peasants. In the press of the political crisis an inequable division was made, some ejidal groups getting two or more dotations, others getting land that was nonproductive. The peasants, restless, cried "Politics!" and elected a state governor, Humberto Canto Echeverría, who expelled the central government's representatives, the Ejidal Bank, and reorganized the whole state into a huge henequén-growing collective, beautifully planned on paper but in the operation clumsy and clogged with political favoritism. A hurricane destroyed food crops in 1938, the henequén growers left half the henequén crop standing in the field, the henequén that was harvested was processed into a type of binder twine for which there was no export market. . . . Governor Canto took refuge in Mexico City while the peasants starved.

The banana-growing industry in Tabasco had been involved in politics for years before Cárdenas took office. Tomás Garrido Canábal's Red Shirts became involved in a feud with a Toledano-led labor faction in the state at the time when the wave of strikes that led to Calles' downfall was in progress. When Cárdenas expelled Garrido Canábal the banana-growing industry was expropriated and collectivized. This industry was attacked by the *chamusco*, the banana blight, and the workers became involved in troubles with the Southern Banana Corporation, the chief outlet for their product. In 1938, a new governor, Trujillo Gurría, was elected: he charged that the company deliberately over-ordered only to reject a large majority of the bananas on the pretext that they were affected by the disease. He estimated that the return per stem had sunk from

3 pesos to 70 centavos. The worker-owned industry was in a serious crisis.

The rice-growing industry in Michoacán became deeply involved in a three-cornered political feud. The peasants rose up and took over the plantations, owned by Italian capital, and Cárdenas confirmed this by expropriating. No financing organization was set up and the peasants lost their first crop. Governor Gildardo Magaña was in favor of organizing the industry on the basis of small individually held farm plots, the *villista* idea, as against the collectivist plan. This was, of course, in direct opposition to Cárdenas' policy; he had the peasants organized into coöperatives financed by the Ejidal Bank. Peasants of the Magaña persuasion became involved in disputes over control by the banks; the industry suffered.

Another factor that affected agricultural production as a whole was that many private owners, anticipating expropriation, ceased to invest capital in their agricultural properties. They had observed that the improved properties were the first to attract the attention of peasants who wanted land and that production of a good crop more often than not brought expropriation before the harvest could be garnered.

Cárdenas used the resources and the legislative power of the state to correct the defects of the national situation wherever he could, always within the frame of his collectivist idea. But he was one man—and his program affected millions, bringing their lives directly into the control of bureaucrats in a nation where the tradition of rotten politics is deeply set.

It had been said to me by people close to Cárdenas, his sincerest adherents, that his program fell into difficulties because the "human element failed." In fairness to the Mexican peasant and worker, it should be pointed out that this failure is as much

the fault of rotten politics as of their own incapacity. What is more important politically, the people themselves blamed it all on the *políticos*.

Within a year after Cárdenas had made for himself an enduring place in the history of Mexico's great by unloosing the "claws of imperialism" from their grip on Mexico's oil, Mexico's difficulties were becoming serious.

The agrarian program was limping badly. The industrial worker coöperatives became involved in political squabbles that became more important than the success of the collective effort; that is what they mean when they say that efficiency went down under worker management. A chart prepared by the department of Economic Studies of the *Banco de México* and published in a *Memoria* of the Mexican Chamber of Commerce and Industry, shows that the volume of production in general, of mining products, of electric energy and of manufactured products, all of which had been on a gentle rise from the bottom in the depression year of 1932, levelled off in 1937; charts from other official sources show a sharp downward drop beginning with 1938. With agricultural production down, mining production and sales down, with oil production and sales down, Mexico's export surplus declined till only the silver sales kept it from having an adverse balance of payments. The National Railways, mainly dependent on mining, lost revenue. The government's tax receipts fell; tax yield from mining went down with production; a third of the yield from the oil industry went to the government, but the volume of oil sales was down and prices lower. The worker-owned industrial and agricultural co-operatives were, of course, tax free. The annual budgetary deficit, mounting since 1936, jumped from 15,625,000 pesos in 1937 to 58,666,000 in 1938. Issuance of paper money and coins

with a silver content that represented only a fraction of their face value was accelerated.

The cost of living went steadily up. By the summer of 1939, its index, taking 1934 as 100, had reached 160. Wages, though they had been increased—from 25 to 33 per cent in major industries still owned by private capital, less in the worker-owned factories—were not keeping pace with living costs. Real earnings were down.

The national economy was squeezed between falling exports and rising imports; the people between rising living costs and wages that did not keep pace.

This was the situation that Mexico had to face in the spring and summer of 1939 . . . and along with it, the solution of a problem that has shaken Mexico like an earthquake time and time again, the question of the presidential succession.

VIII

POLITICIANS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER

A CIRCUMSTANCE that complicates Mexico's interior politics greatly is that concurrent with the term of office of any president or the period of influence of any dictator (of course you don't dare call a Mexican leader by that name till he has fallen and passed to history) there are always rising numerous candidates for the position of real power in the guise of "pre-candidates" for the presidency. The main political problem of the man in power is to keep these aspirants nicely counterbalanced; when one becomes too strong, means must be found to "*cortarle el paso*," to stop him. If all the other worries that come up in the life of a Mexican strong man aren't enough to give him nightmares, I should think this one surely must be, for a mistake is likely to cost him not only his power, but also his life.

During the latter days of Calles' dictatorship, two major threats to his power had developed. One came from Portes Gil, who since his term of office as interim president had been perennially longing to thrust his iron hand into the velvet glove. He had made a strong bid when, as president of the PNR, he headed a leftish (it was left of Calles) bolt. This move Calles stopped by putting Cárdenas into the presidency of the official party.

In the early thirties, when Vicente Lombardo Toledano headed the left movement that broke the CROM, Calles' an-

swer was to throw full government support behind Tomás Garrido Canábal's Red-Shirt labor-union movement.

The appeal of the CGOC was its attempt to force the "labor authorities by moral pressure to hand down decisions of vital importance to the working classes of the country . . . to achieve a change in the policies of the government with respect to the unsolved problems of the Mexican Revolution and the renewal of the struggle of the working masses against native capitalists and foreign imperialism. . . ." (I quote the official history—and the strikes against the *callista* and foreign-owned companies bear it out.)

The Red-Shirt movement based its popular appeal on anti-clericalism; Tomás Garrido Canábal advocated a system of land distribution under which a class of small peasant proprietors should be created, but this was not put into practice in his state, where the banana industry was still largely controlled by the *hacendados* and the fruit company. While the Toledano-led sections of labor were laying the blame for the breakdown of the Revolution on the *callistas* and attacking them forthwith, the Red Shirts laid it on forces even further to the right, the Church, and burned churches and murdered the faithful to prove their point. It was the tried and proved Calles technique of distracting attention from the real issue.

Cárdenas, as member of Rodríguez' cabinet and rising candidate for the post of puppet-president, had supported Garrido Canábal and the Red Shirts. He, in return, received their support for his candidacy within the party and before the people.

When Cárdenas was chosen as candidate for the presidency, the three men who were potentially strongest as his rivals for the position of power that Calles occupied were Garrido Canábal, Portes Gil and Cedillo. Portes Gil had influence within

the PNR, with the politicians and the numerous and influential government-employee class; Cedillo had influence with the army, with the peasants and with the Church. Of the three, Garrido Canábal, with his labor unions, was the strongest at the moment.

When Cárdenas assumed office, Garrido Canábal was asked to take the post of Minister of Agriculture, a prize plum in Cárdenas' first, that is, his Calles-Cárdenas cabinet. The inside story told in Mexico City is that this was done at Cárdenas' insistence, upon the suggestion of one of his best friends, Manuel Avila Camacho, brother of a rising political boss in the state of Puebla, Maximino Avila Camacho, whose attitude toward the Church was even more friendly than that of Cedillo. Manuel had been zone commander of Tabasco, stationed at Villahermosa, capital of Garrido Canábal's bailiwick, and he had firsthand information on the Tabasco situation. The general idea was that if Garrido were given enough rope, he'd hang himself.

The Tabasco dictator arrived in Mexico City in a red-and-black airplane, installed his henchmen in the Ministry of Agriculture . . . and the Red Shirts took the national capital over. Celebrating, they held an antireligious meeting in front of a church in Coyoacán, a suburb of the city, and became involved in a fracas with the Catholics issuing from mass. There was shooting and five were killed. This was on December 29, 1934, only a short time after Garrido Canábal's triumphant arrival.

The "Coyoacán massacre" roused immense public indignation and the Red-Shirt movement lost ground steadily from that date. While the leader was enjoying all the privileges of a *callista* politician in the capital, a double-barreled attack was made on his strength at home. A Cedillo-sponsored fascist

group, made up in the main of young university students, attacked from the right; Lombardo Toledano's left labor movement, working in close coöperation with the Communist Party, drew strength away to the left, quietly organizing Garrido Canábal's peasants out from under him.

In July 1935, after the breach between Cárdenas and Calles became open, a group of university students led by Brito Foucher, afterwards accused of shady dealings with Mexican fascist leaders and Germans in Mexico, went to Villahermosa, to "clean it up." There was shooting; a number of students were killed. Each side charged the other with having been the aggressor.

This second massacre aroused public indignation to a fever heat. Cárdenas ordered an investigation in Tabasco and stopped antireligious demonstrations. The investigation resulted unfavorably to Garrido Canábal and he left the country shortly afterwards. Exit Garrido Canábal.

Portes Gil and Cedillo, both of whom had supported Cárdenas in the fight against Calles and the Red-Shirt dictator, were now the two potential strong men. Gil's plan was to make Calles' ex-puppet, Cárdenas, his instrument. Cedillo wanted the presidency. There were a few others showing on the horizon. Amaro was not out of the picture, Magaña was still a possibility; there was Andreu Almazán quietly building army strength at Monterrey where he had started consumer coöperatives that really worked. There was also General Román Yocupicio gathering strength in Sonora, the state that gives Mexico its presidents and revolutions. Amaro was a dangerous proposition, a real Revolutionary of the old direct-action school, but he had lost army backing when as Calles' Secretary of War he used measures of discipline that were, to say the least, stern.

His method of approach to power was the old-fashioned one of the *cuartelazo*, or at least so the communists charged in alleging that he was at the bottom of a plot to kill Cárdenas on September 16, 1936. Whether true or not—the evidence has long since been lost in the welter of other plots and counterplots—it stymied Amaro . . . temporarily.

Out of the shake-up when Calles was disposed of, Portes Gil emerged firmly seated in the presidency of the PNR. Cedillo was offered the cabinet post left vacant by Garrido Canábal and he was brave enough to take it.

Portes Gil was given instructions to purge the PNR of *callista* sentiment and to organize peasant leagues to coöperate with the official party. Toledano's organization had won great prestige in its successful fight in the Laguna and the Tabasco struggles and it was thought desirable to offset the CTM's growing strength in areas where commercial agricultural crops were grown. The move would at the same time provide an official bulwark against Cedillo's peasant strength. The peasants and laborers were to be allowed to vote in the PNR primaries.

But Portes Gil, ever impatient of power—it must have been extremely bitter for a man of his political talent to have been disqualified for the presidency by a paltry interim term of fourteen months—used his PNR influence to fill state and federal offices with *portesgilistas*. The gubernatorial elections held under his direction were classics of "impositionism"; that of Miguel Alemán in the state of Vera Cruz raised a cry that echoed and re-echoed among the outraged lefts at Mexico City. Furthermore, Portes Gil—fatal mistake—dabbled in intrigue with the company-union labor movement that was then attacking Toledano for his connections with the communists. In sum,

our friend Portes, reinstalled in the key position as reward for support in toppling Calles, set happily about the business of reassembling *callista* rank and file under his own leadership. As fire from the left grew hotter, Cárdenas was "forced" to take a hand—and out went both Portes and his attackers. The latter were afterwards quietly reinstalled in official favor.

Exit Portes Gil—temporarily at least, for the only Mexican politicians who really withdraw from politics when they make a misstep and lose power are the ones who catch a bullet in the final confusion. When Portes Gil left the political limelight for the second time, as a parting shot he wrote a letter to the press saying that Cárdenas, at a meeting in Guadalajara, had promised him a place in his government so long as he should hold office. This charge of treachery fell rather flat, under the circumstances.

Now Cedillo, the peasant leader who deserved the name because he was a peasant who had become a leader rather than because he was leading the peasants toward their goal of possession of the land, became Threat Number One. Cárdenas' truce with the Church in 1937 cut some ground from under his feet; the attacks of the Lombardo Toledano labor movement, now acquiring semiofficial status through the continued coöperation of Cárdenas and Lombardo, were even more effective. The fiction of Cedillo's peasant leadership was punctured by statistics proving that in San Luis Potosí land distribution existed not and by publication of information showing that all the oppressive practices of the *porfirian* tradition were used to hold the Cedillo machine together. As Cedillo's popular strength weakened, he came to depend more and more on a "military" alliance with Rodríguez' fascist Gold Shirts.

The final blow to his national peasant movement came when

Cárdenas had a number of government departments concerned with the active administration of the land reform program removed from the control of the Department of Agriculture. After that, Cedillo's only hope lay in revolution, which he busily plotted with Rodríguez and, according to documents published by the communists and discoveries made by the Mexican official police, with German and Japanese agents. I have seen copies of documents that also purported to connect Rodríguez with the oil companies. When the showdown finally came, in May, 1938, Cárdenas got on the presidential train, took federal troops to San Luis Potosí and started distributing land to the peasants. Cedillo's national peasant uprising failed to materialize, because arms did not get through from Guatemala, according to some; because of his lack of popular support, according to others. At any rate, Cedillo fled to the hills with a small band of supporters and afterwards was shot in a skirmish or in his bed, according to whose version you accept. You have to remember that in Mexico, there is no such thing as an impartial official source; and unofficial ones often tell contradictory stories.

Exit Cedillo the Bull—finally.

Cárdenas is said to have wept when he heard of Cedillo's death. I imagine few others did; Cedillo's gangster methods—he once rode into Mexico City with an escort of two hundred and fifty gunmen—were notorious. The Mexican people put up with browbeating and bullying from their politicians, but that does not mean that they like it.

If you will follow Cárdenas' rise to power in Mexico, you will see that every move that strengthened his position in reference to the *callistas*, to the oil companies and to Cedillo also strengthened Lombardo Toledano.

Toledano broke the CROM; Cárdenas and Toledano, with some help from Cedillo, Portes Gil and others, broke Calles; Cárdenas and Toledano took the ground from under the feet of the native industrialists in their attempt to re-form around Portes Gil; Toledano took strength from both Garrido Canábal and Cedillo. His movement was the spearhead of the attack on the oil companies; it won victories in the sugar industry, the oil industry, the silk and artificial silk industry, the rubber industry, the public services, in the agricultural industries in La Laguna, Tabasco, Yucatán, the Mexicali Valley, the Yaqui River Valley. It publicly claimed credit for advanced interpretations of the labor laws by labor tribunals, the most outstanding of which were enumerated in a CTM National Committee Report as follows:

"The suspension of work in a factory because of the lack of electric current resulting from a strike is not to be considered a 'fortuitous occurrence,' nor 'an act of God.' The employer is obliged to pay the wages of his workers when work has been suspended against their will and even against the will of the employer, as in the case of lack of electric current resulting from a strike.

"A worker dismissed by his employer without just cause has the right to choose between the legal indemnity or reinstatement in his job; if he chooses the latter, the employer is compelled to reinstate him, and if he refuses to do so, he must pay the worker his wages during all the time that his refusal persists.

"When a Board of Conciliation and Arbitration declares a strike illegal and the workers have won an injunction (*amparo*) against this decision in the Federal Courts they conserve the right to renew the strike if it should so suit their interests, even though they may already have returned to work.

"The owners of an enterprise cannot of their own accord declare their business unprofitable; only the Boards of Conciliation and Arbitration may authorize the suspension of labor in a

factory or other place of work, or the closing of a business.

"Employers may not terminate a labor contract, even though they assume the financial responsibilities of this action (which ordinarily means indemnities), when the dismissal of the worker implies a violation of acquired rights, such as those of pension privileges and others of the same order.

"Salesmen, bill collectors, renters of automobiles who work either for their own profit or for that of the owner are all individuals who, in general terms, have no other means of livelihood than the product of their labor, and hence are subject to labor jurisprudence and are protected by the Federal Labor Law.

"The burden of proof for 'unjustified dismissal' of a worker falls on the employer.

"Debts of an employer to his workers for unpaid wages have preference over all other debts, of no matter what kind.

"The juridical personality of labor unions derives from the fact itself of their constitution; once the workers have complied with the formalities stipulated by the law, the unions they have created acquire legal personality, since it is not the will of the State which grants this personality nor does registration by the labor authorities add anything to their character of persons under the labor law."

In a word, Toledano took credit for most of the advances in interpretation of the labor laws that Cárdenas' pro-labor policy had brought about. It would have been more tactful if the President's coöperation had been mentioned.

There had been, in the spring of 1937, a split in the CTM when members of the Communist Party who were also CTM union leaders headed a revolt on technical questions of tactics and of authority, but an agreement on national and international aims was reached and the Central Committee of the Communist Party, at its meeting held from the 26th to the 30th of June, 1937, instructed the unions that it controlled to return to the CTM.

In 1937, Lombardo Toledano's organization claimed nearly a million members. When Cedillo's army strength threatened, a "*deportive-militar*," a military sports program, was planned; the movement was to be given a striking arm. It was undoubtedly growing very powerful.

As early as 1936, with his instructions to Portes Gil to strengthen the PNR among the peasants, Cárdenas had attempted to create a counterbalance to this rising labor movement, but Portes' treachery scuttled this plan. In 1937, the peasant league idea was given new life and plans for a national peasants' organization, the *Confederación Nacional Campesina*, were formulated. The CTM protested loss of control over its peasant unions in the commercial agricultural industries; a compromise was reached and it was agreed that those already formed should go into the new organization with the understanding that they would be permitted to "consult" with the CTM. Graciano Sánchez, a former rural schoolteacher who as one of the "young radical" group had given the Cárdenas candidacy an enthusiastic send-off at the nominating convention in 1933, was to head the new organization. (Graciano Sánchez is a portly Indian who looks like the Walrus in *Alice*.) It is interesting to note that as the strength of the labor militia grew, a peasant militia was formed, officered by the Mexican army.

Within the bosom of the PNR, there still remained a section of the old *portesgilista* element lingering on after the departure of the twice-lost leader. This situation had to be dealt with and it was met by a movement to form a government employees' union sponsored by the "young radicals" of the PNR. The union wanted to affiliate with the CTM, but Cárdenas intervened personally to forbid it.

Lombardo Toledano began to take trips around the country, investigating conditions among the workers and the peasants; he would return to the national capital and announce that "something must be done"; conferences with Cárdenas would follow; the President would take action. Like as not he would go himself, in the Olive Train, the presidential special, to investigate. Naturally it was always Cárdenas who finally distributed the lands, or expropriated the factories or applied whatever the solution for the particular local situation might be, but Toledano was still very much in evidence. His habit of making trips must have made Cárdenas a little nervous.

The CTM had been formed shortly before the Spanish civil war broke out and as this conflict progressed, the Toledano-led movement espoused the Loyalist cause and the Popular Front idea with enthusiasm. As the CTM's growth was increasingly hampered by Cárdenas' action in sponsoring independent peasant and government-employee unions, its leaders championed this plan even more fervently. In 1937, the CTM "invited" the peasants, the Communist Party and the PNR to join with it in a Mexican Popular Front. The invitation was accepted; Cárdenas approved it; he told the American journalist, Joseph Freeman, of his sincere desire that his successor be chosen by a Popular Front.

Lombardo Toledano's Popular Front never came into being. It received two checks, one indirect, the other direct and final.

Diego Rivera, who has done as much as any one individual to gain world-wide publicity for the Cárdenas phase of the Mexican Revolution, had been trying for years to gain permission for Leon Trotsky to come to Mexico. While the Popular Front idea was being increasingly agitated by the CTM and the communists, General Francisco Múgica, whose revo-

lutionary record as an extreme left and whose position as head of the department in charge of the Six-Year Plan's road-building program gave him considerable political influence, joined with Rivera in this effort, and permission was granted. The permit was issued through Múgica's department.

Before Trotsky arrived, late in 1937, the CTM issued a public protest saying that it considered Trotsky's presence "undesirable because, since the Russian politician was the leader of the so-called Fourth International, he would necessarily have to embark on activities which, directly or indirectly, would reflect on the program of the Mexican working class and the policies of the Mexican government with respect to the most important national and international problems; and also because it was evident that the tactics proclaimed by Trotsky were in open contradiction to the alliance between the working class and other sections of the Mexican population and the government of General Cárdenas."

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the Cárdenas government, replied that Trotsky was coming to Mexico under protection of the right of political asylum, guarantee of which had been announced as a basic policy of the Cárdenas government, and that his presence in Mexico would cause no trouble, since he had promised not to concern himself in any way with the Mexican interior political situation.

Unfortunately for the hopes of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trotsky was already involved in the Mexican political situation; in his book, *The Revolution Betrayed: or the Crimes of Stalin*, brought out by Grasset in Paris that same year, he made references to Lombardo Toledano that the latter interpreted as a charge that he had been bought by Moscow's gold, that he was a false prophet of the Mexican labor movement

and an adherent to the stalinist pact of silence against Trotsky.

The Third National Council of the CTM, in its session at Vera Cruz in January 1937, decided that (I quote the official report): "the working class would accord no special importance to Trotsky's presence in Mexico, to prevent his residence among us from being exploited to split the labor movement; that no public meetings would be organized to comment on the presence of Trotsky in Mexico; under no circumstances to demand Trotsky's expulsion from the country, as the responsibility for his being in Mexico had been left with the Government of the Republic; and to send a circular . . . explaining the differences between our Confederation and trotskyism, for the proper orientation of the members of the CTM and which could be used as a basis of discussion of the case in union meetings."

This determination to ignore Trotsky publicly while dissecting him privately did not hold out; soon *El Popular* and other pro-Lombardo publications were engaged in impassioned debates turning on the question. Trotsky, installed in Diego Rivera's house in Coyoacán, responded—if indirectly—by carrying on his fight against the idea of the People's Front in his published articles and in manifestos. His promise not to comment publicly on the Cárdenas Mexican Revolution he kept. Furthermore, when certain Mexican generals, awed by the fame of the former Commissar of War of the Russian Revolution, sought his advice on the military organization of the Mexican army, he sent them word that all he knew how to organize was a revolution, not an army.

Diego Rivera had happily headed the welcoming committee of generals and politicians who, with a large police escort, had accompanied Trotsky into Mexico City, but he became less

happy as the CTM-communist attack grew hotter. They accused him of being Trotsky's official spokesman, the means through which he side-stepped the promise not to dabble in Mexican affairs. Diego was not used to the realities of the revolutionary milieu surrounding Trotsky; he began to be nervous about GPU agents and his friends said he had developed a persecution complex.

Out of the storm of discussion and agitation and argument that Trotsky's arrival in Mexico caused, there arose at least two immediate effects: first, the polemics over Toledano's relations with the communists and Stalin widened the division between the conservative elements of the PNR and the CTM leadership; secondly, the ultra-left sentiment that had previously lacked definite leadership began to group itself around the personality of Francisco Múgica. Toledano's plan for a pact between the four or five strongest organizations of the Revolution did not prosper.

Cárdenas administered the Toledano Front its *coup de grâce* by announcing the complete reorganization of the forces of the Revolution into a new official party to take the place of the PNR. Thus was born the Cárdenas Popular Front, the *Partido de la Revolución Mexicana*, announced to the nation in a speech by the President on December 19, 1937.

Organization of the PRM was completed in March, 1938, not long after the oil expropriations. The moment was a propitious one; never had Cárdenas' personal prestige been higher. He had just defied the mighty oil companies and turned the nation's bonanza industry over to labor; who were they to cavil if he walked away with their Popular Front that they had been working toward so long? There were, no doubt, large numbers of workers who forgot that it was Toledano and the

CTM organization that had won all their victories; a good many of them may have become confused and thought it was Cárdenas.

The old PNR was a simple organization of bureaucrats and politicians who selected party candidates on the basis of place of residence, as we do in the United States. Within the new party, representation was to be based, not on the individual's position in geography, his place of residence, but on his position in society, his class and occupation. There were four main divisions, namely: the Army, the Peasants, Labor, and everybody else, lumped together under the head of the People. These were the four "sectors" of the party, held together by an Executive Committee, called familiarly the *Estado Mayor*, I believe. Candidates for all public offices except that of president of the republic were selected as follows: certain offices would be given to each sector to fill; the sector would then designate the party candidate and the whole organization would be pledged to support that candidate at the polls. The method of choosing the presidential candidate was somewhat different: each sector was to select its candidate by majority vote; the man who carried three or more sectors would be the official choice.

The charge that the PRM was a "fascistic importation" was not long in coming—from fascistic sources, according to the PRM—but it was hotly denied on the grounds that Mussolini didn't invent fascism; that the theory of corporative representation stemmed from "guild socialism" and "George Sorel's anarcho-syndicalist theories" and so forth. The charge that Cárdenas' collectivist scheme for workers' and peasants' co-operatives was communistic had been consistently defended on similar grounds: that the Mexican Revolution antedated

the Russian, that the Mexican Indians had a system of communal land-ownership in the pre-conquest era, and so on. The whole argument seems a useless splitting of hairs; on paper neither the functional party nor the collectivist plan follows foreign models exactly, and far less do they in operation. You can say that the PRM was a fascist-ish or fascist-like organization formed as the political instrument to assure, on the basis of class and occupational representation in public office, the continuance of a communistic-ish program aimed at the ultimate creation, in spots, of a classless non-capitalistic society—and when you remember that this movement as a whole was in the hands of army officers, bureaucrats and trade-union politicians who had been for years putting themselves as rapidly as possible into the capitalistic, especially the urban property-owning class, you have in the end to agree with the Mexican contention that their Cárdenas Revolution was something essentially Mexican and like nothing else that had ever previously been developed anywhere.

At its inception, the PRM claimed over four million members, as follows: Labor, 1,250,000; Peasants, 2,500,000; Soldiers, 55,000; Popular Sector, 500,000. This could only be theoretical, since the respective figures cover just about all the organized workers that there are in the Republic, all the peasants who have received land or could expect to receive it in the near future, and more soldiers than the army actually has on the active list (perhaps they included the retired generals). The number set for the popular sector coincides roughly with the best estimate that you can get for the government employees.

In operation, the PRM proved a sort of political clearing-house for four organizations: the CTM; the new peasants'

union, the CNC; the army; and politicians and government employees. (The Popular Sector also included organized unions of professional and business people, women and the youth.) The general staff met at headquarters on the *Paseo de la Reforma* at Mexico City and decided which offices each sector might fill. Within each sector, candidates were then chosen by the sector *estado mayor*, executive committee or controlling clique. The tickets were voted on by the labor unions at union headquarters, by the peasants at the central office of the *ejido*, at the *ejidal* bank or the schoolhouse, wherever the headquarters of the peasant league might happen to be; the soldiers voted in their barracks and the "people" at the headquarters of whatever union they happened to be qualified for membership in. The executive committee supervised voting and was supreme authority in election disputes, which made its power complete.

The PRM, as conceived and organized, was a very efficient means through which party leaders could control the selection of party candidates; the higher-ups could neatly balance army against labor, labor against peasant, and fill in with bureaucratic strength wherever there were gaps. It was really quite simple from there on: the leaders could hand out the preferred tickets on primary day; a union member or an *ejidal* peasant or a government employee or a soldier who presented himself to vote would naturally be in no position to ignore the wishes of the central headquarters.

Nomination by the official party was, and is, followed, as if automatically, by election at the polls.

The PRM was based on the assumption that all the 1,250,000 workers of the organized labor movement, the 2,500,000 peasants of the peasant leagues, the 55,000 soldiers and the

500,000 people and bureaucrats were satisfied and happy with the progress of the Cárdenas Revolution, with the leaders of their various organizations and with the ideas and leadership of all the sectors with which they were associated within the Cárdenas party. This was, unfortunately for official hopes, not true; formation of the official party did not sink differences between *lombardistas* and *portesgilistas*; furthermore, while the leaders of the component parties came willingly and readily into the official organization, there were many of the rank and file who were dissatisfied with their immediate leaders if not with the supreme director of the Revolution, and they were more or less apathetic toward the PRM.

The PRM was organized mainly to elect Cárdenas' successor, and at the time of its creation pre-candidacies for the official candidacy were already well defined.

One of the strongest was Múgica's. Múgica was one of the revolutionaries *pur sang*; he had fought in all of the political and a good many of the military battles of the movement since 1910. He is called an *hombre cuerdo*, a level-headed man; furthermore, he was hardheaded and did not hesitate to tell Cárdenas, years his junior, what he thought. When he became involved in the attack on Lombardo Toledano and the communists, it lost him the favor of the CTM, naturally, but at the same time it gained strength for him with left elements that did not want to be identified with communism and it even won the sympathies of groups to the right of Toledano. As Minister of Communications he had had a chance to make friends among construction companies and the politicians who held their interests dear. Múgica had strength among the peasants, before whom he had a long record as champion of their cause.

His election to the presidency would have meant that he would have been the man in power—if he could possibly manage it.

His candidacy for the presidency was one of the first to be defined and as it gained adherents, Congress, a reservoir of *portesgilism* since the last PNR elections, framed an act that would have taken the Six-Year Plan's road-building program out of Múgica's control. This was the way Cedillo had been shorn of power, when agrarian matters were taken out of the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture. But Múgica did not take the hint. Then a scandal broke; the cost of the new show highway from Mexico City to Guadalajara was found to be disproportionately high in comparison with other roads built in the republic—even those with longer stretches through mountainous regions. The glare of publicity gradually widened till Damaso Cárdenas, brother of the President and the financial wizard of the family, figured in the gossip as real owner of the construction company that had the government contract to build the road. The President ordered an official investigation and everybody was cleared, although Múgica's luster was somewhat dimmed. But the move that was really neat took place when Múgica, in January, 1939, resigned from his cabinet post to enter the race for the party candidacy (there is a rule that presidential candidates may not hold official government position or active army command). At that time, Cárdenas appointed to Communications Melquiades Angulo, who as Sub-secretary had had a feud with Múgica. This effectively cut Múgica off from using influence built up as cabinet member. Denied the party candidacy, he made a sprint as an independent; but later withdrew to accept a zone command

and support the party candidate. Much of his following went to the opposition.

There was Magaña. He was an old army man, one of the dust, saddle and blood revolutionaries; furthermore, he had been a strong advocate of an agrarian reform that was becoming increasingly popular, that of granting the *ejidatarios* title to their plots of ground within the *ejido*. Magaña was a level-headed man not given to fancy theorizing. Failing to win the official nomination, he announced as an independent and his cause seemed to be flourishing when it was cut short by an untimely death. He died of an acute ailment, but there was a great deal of gossip and so many references were made to General Ángel Flores (Calles' opponent in 1920, whom Obregón was accused of having poisoned) that Magaña's brother wrote a letter to the press to explain the circumstances. It seems a poor way to combat a rumor—but then political canards are very difficult to deal with; if you don't deny them, they gain strength; if you do, it gives them a sort of semiofficial standing.

Sánchez Tapia, a legitimate general and a seasoned revolutionary, was an aspirant. He was identified with the right wing within the party but had no real popular strength. He moved even further to the right and was permitted to run as the independent rightish opposition. There always has to be an opposition candidate; Villarreal was the unofficially official one when Cárdenas ran in 1933-34. The system is slightly complicated, but in time you get used to it. The point is to have an opposition, but one that doesn't oppose too much.

There had been a number of other prospects. Barba González, Cárdenas' Secretary of *Gobernación*, the department that has charge of election matters and is a good spot from which to build a machine, passed cards and campaign literature

around among government employees, but he had no army connections and no peasant support. Castillo Nájera, ambassador to Washington, called "the Carrier Pigeon" from his frequent airplane flights between the two capitals, was mentioned; he was a good *cardenista*, but lacked army strength.

Among these younger men who were dark horses at the beginning of the pre-campaign was Manuel Avila Camacho, Cárdenas' Secretary of National Defense. This is the choice spot in which to groom a presidential candidate. Obregón was Carranza's Secretary of War, Calles was Obregón's, Rodríguez was Ortiz Rubio's, Cárdenas was Rodríguez'. Avila Camacho, however, was not one of the old-line army politicians; he did not seem strong at first. However, the very fact that Cárdenas had put him in the Defense Ministry was an indication of his favor; this supposition was strengthened in the spring of 1939 when the CNC, the newly formed peasant organization that was Cárdenas' very own, endorsed Avila Camacho. The CTM, almost simultaneously, endorsed him, presenting when it did so detailed suggestions for the Second Six-Year Plan, a circumstance that caused the cynically-minded to murmur about horse-trading. The PRM convention was held in the fall of 1939; Avila Camacho entered the summer home-stretch with fifty per cent of the organization already pledged to him.

The army had been counted on for the third vote; the Popular Sector would swing in behind. Unfortunately, however, when Avila Camacho resigned from his cabinet post in January—at the same time that Múgica resigned—a friend of Múgica's, Agustín Castro, had been given Defense, perhaps as a sop to Múgica for the appointment of Melquiades Angulo to *his* post. Múgica was strong in January; it would have been impolitic for Cárdenas to give him a direct slap in the face.

However that may be, as Avila Camacho's candidacy went into convention, there was doubt about the army, and the Popular Sector, controlled by the politicians of the old PNR, held balance of power.

Avila Camacho's conservative connections aided him here; a combination of state governors and senators—he finally mustered a majority of the Senate and at least half the deputies to his support—swung the convention in his favor. The army fell in behind to make it unanimous.

At the time of the convention Portes Gil, who had ostensibly retired from politics and was little active except in controlling his state, Tamaulipas, was not in evidence; yet the senators and the governors who swung the convention for Avila Camacho were those whom Portes had put in office during his term as PNR president under Cárdenas. Miguel Alemán, governor of Vera Cruz, Wenceslao Labra, governor of the state of Mexico, V. Fernández Romero, governor of Tabasco, had gone in at that time. There was Ezequiel Padilla, once a Calles favorite, who somehow emerged from the confusion at the time of the *Jefe Máximo's* overthrow with a nice spot in the Senate . . . elected by Portes, too. And there was Maximino Avila Camacho himself, governor of the state of Puebla. Alemán was subsequently Avila Camacho's campaign manager.

The story goes that this combination of governors, under Alemán's leadership, carried their Sector and the convention by a trick, that they sent word down the line that Cárdenas wanted Avila Camacho elected when, as a matter of fact, Cárdenas had given no such orders. This, you will notice, follows the pattern set when Cárdenas was nominated. At that time the story was spread that Rodolfo Calles and Aaron Saenz had engineered Cárdenas' selection without the *Jefe Máximo's* ap-

proval. There is a very good reason why it is desirable to establish and maintain the legend that the successor to the man in power is chosen without his knowledge and consent; Díaz was overturned, Carranza was overturned and shot and Obregón was shot outright for "impositions" that were too flagrant.

Various conjectures have centered upon Cárdenas' choice of Avila Camacho. The opposition said (a) it was because he thought he would be manageable (one of the bits of propaganda most often repeated during the campaign was *a Avila Camacho le manda la suegra*, Avila Camacho's mother-in-law bosses him); and (b) that Cárdenas hoped that Avila Camacho's conservative leanings and his connection with Maximino, known to be very reactionary and called the Mad Czar in Puebla, would eventually provoke a severe reaction from the left, that is, from organized labor, which would, a few months after the new president assumed office, create a situation that would make it necessary to call Cárdenas back into active control. To a fairly straight-thinking mind, this last seems over-subtle; it must have sprung from vivid imaginations that had been making precedents of the numerous instances in which the Toledano-led labor movement had "forced" Cárdenas to various actions. However, one of Avila Camacho's first hints of independent policy was to indicate that Toledano would go. Perhaps he had heard the rumor.

An impartial analysis of the various candidacies reveals that Avila Camacho was the only one of the young *cardenistas* who had anything like a chance to combat the army strength that Múgica, Magaña, Sánchez Tapia, Andreu Almazán, whose candidacies were arising, might count on from the mere fact of having taken part in the early military campaigns of the Revo-

lution. Avila Camacho's army luster was a bit factitious, it is true; it came from his work as Cárdenas' Secretary of National Defense; he saw little active campaigning and was never more than a minor clerical officer during the Revolution while the others were getting to be generals of eighteen and twenty; yet he had had a chance to become favorably known among the military as pleasant and well-intentioned.

It seems even more likely that Avila Camacho's conservative leanings may have figured in the choice. Cárdenas had never given up his habit of touring around the country, keeping his finger on the public pulse, and even in the winter of 1938-1939 he must have known that all was not going so well as could be hoped. Whatever the whitewashing of the financial situation before the public—the government-operated oil industry was generally thought to be flourishing at that time, when it was actually beginning to operate at a deficit—those on the inside must have seen that certain changes in policy, a modification of the Cárdenas Revolution's radicalism, was inevitable if that Revolution were to continue its march. In 1938, modification of one of the regime's radical programs had already been started: the "socialistic" theories taught in the public schools, the ideas that ordinary people somehow or other confused with communism, were toned down. The more radical books were withdrawn from circulation and became very hard to get possession of, as if there were an attempt to blot out the fact that they had ever been.

Analogy for this situation can be found in Calles' career. His term as president began with a strong left swing in which organized labor was king and the oil companies and the Church were attacked. There were unfavorable economic repercussions, a serious depression. Calles tacked by putting in Portes Gil,

who had been going left with the best of them but began a right turn once in office; this right swing was made even more definite under Ortiz Rubio, when employer was favored as against employee and land distribution slowed down to nothing. (The curve of strike and land distribution statistics follows these movements, naturally.) When the pendulum began swinging in the other direction, Calles met the situation by discarding Ortiz Rubio and putting in Rodríguez, under whom the curve of strikes and land distribution started up again.

Cárdenas began his term with a sharp leftward swing, attacking capitalism and the oil companies, under a semi-truce with the Church. He was in financial difficulties in 1937; tried to solve the situation by going even further and expropriating oil; by 1939 he knew what the effects of this action were to be. Even the stupidest politician—and lack of political acumen can never be charged against Cárdenas—must have seen that a right tack was desirable. Time had come to “consolidate” the gains of the Cárdenas phase of the Revolution.

You can go back to Carranza and see the same pattern: Carranza started his regime by encouraging labor, swinging left; he modified and finally turned openly conservative. Even Díaz *started* as a liberal; he overturned the Tejada government under the revolutionary banner of the day, that of “Constitutional government and no re-election,” only to turn right as soon as his power was firm. Of course, all revolutions turn right sooner or later: Mexico’s one-man movements have a way of turning sooner.

Choice of a successor for a Mexican man in power must always be a rather difficult one; for Cárdenas it was rendered doubly so because it was desirable, if he wished to remain the man in power, to choose a successor who was not strong enough

to become a rival; at the same time, someone must be designated who could meet any threat that might materialize from outside the Cárdenas party.

That such an opposition would arise was plain. Listen to Cárdenas, speaking to the nation on November 20, 1938, on the occasion of the celebration of the birth of the Revolution:

"I want to speak to you for the second time, and most seriously on this anniversary, about the impatience that some sectors are showing over the question of the presidential succession. While the disciplined forces of the *Partido de la Revolución Mexicana* (the PRM) are keeping a calm attitude in view of the fact that it is unusually early to begin political activities, there are other dissident groups who, dissatisfied with the program, declaration of principles and strategic tactics of the Revolutionary institution composed of peasants, workers and soldiers, are projecting the formation of another organization that shall represent their aspirations in order to enter the political arena as opponent of the *Partido de la Revolución*. The civic aspirations of public opinion, repressed by the iron hand of the dictatorship when they asked for liberty, were the immediate and principal causes of the revolutionary events that we celebrate today and it is, therefore, an elemental duty for all to remain serene toward those sectors that are in disagreement with the people's party, allowing them to organize as fully and as early as they like, duly protected by law and by the authorities, so that the basic principles of the fundamental law shall be fully complied with and the first causes of the Revolution shall receive due respect—this even more since twenty-eight years of constant struggle within the ideology of the Revolution and the schooling of this struggle should have created among the people the consciousness of their rights and

obligations. The time has come when all groups, even the reactionary, organized with the protection of civic liberties, can enjoy a full and aggressive activity and enter into the electoral contention with the same guarantees that exist for the ideas of the revolutionaries and for the social advances gained by the people through their long struggle.

"We remember that several million peasants who were slaves of the landholders in times past have found redemption only in the principles of the Revolution and in the rulers that the Revolution has produced. We remember that thousands of workmen have found only in the Revolution the just guarantee of their aspirations, and that various popular sectors not strictly classified with the two former but considered as belonging to them because of their proletarian sympathies, have found only in the Revolution a saving hand and an invulnerable shield in their struggle. And finally, only the Revolution . . . has achieved for the Mexican woman a complete rescue from her social inferiority, obtaining the constitutional reform necessary to grant her rights and functions of citizenship that put her on the same plane of dignity with man."

(To keep the record straight, let me state that the legislation giving women citizenship and the right to vote had been "approved" by Congress, but not yet enacted into law, so that, strictly speaking, the Revolution had not yet granted woman a complete rescue from her social inferiority. They were not allowed to vote in the 1940 presidential elections, so it still has not done so.)

As early as November 20, 1938, Cárdenas knew there was to be an opposition—a real, not a PRM-managed one—and he gave it a promise that it could organize and go into the elections with the same rights and privileges that the official gov-

ernment machine enjoyed. As he truly said, it had been denial of this civic aspiration of the Mexican people that had brought about the "revolutionary events" that they were celebrating on that date.

In all justice to Cárdenas, you must admit that he followed it with a pretty strong hint that *la Révolution c'est moi*; he did not, at the outset, make the mistake of actually welcoming an opposition, as Díaz had.

IX

THE OPPOSITION REARS ITS HEAD

AFTER the rising clamor of the opposition had forced Cárdenas to give it his rather reluctant permission to organize, it set about doing so with almost indecent haste.

During the winter of 1938-1939 and on into the latter year, political parties sprang up like mushrooms. There were the Party of National Reconstruction, the Democratic Constitutional Front, the Front of Intellectuals and Professionals, the Party of National Action, the Party of Public Salvation, the Party of Democratic Institutional Action, the Liberal Constitutionalist Party, among others. These were comparatively small groups representing the interests of conservative sections of popular opinion: business, the Church, the property-owning class, the industrialists, the political "outs" of all shades, and the middle class; conservative labor was to raise its head later. These parties had various programs; they had no candidate.

Early in February, of 1939, there came into being the Revolutionary Committee for National Reconstruction, a party to form a party. Gilberto Valenzuela was president, Emilio Madero, treasurer, Carlos Roel, secretary; on the executive committee were the Generals Ramón Iturbe, Juan Cabral, Marcelo Caraveo, Jacinto Treviño, and Hector López, all veterans of the Revolution; among the non-military men were Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama, Eduardo Neri, Dr. Atl, Gustavo Molina Font. All of these men had been prominent in the business,

military and political life of Mexico for many years. Mexican politics is a kaleidoscope and it gets so many shake-ups that there are scarcely two men who have followed the same thread of allegiances down through the years. The careers of most of the organizers of the Revolutionary Committee, though simultaneous, had not been parallel; as individuals they had moved from left to right and right to left according to the exigencies of the moment and the place where center was. Emilio Madero, a brother of Francisco, can be best identified as a *carrancista*; Soto y Gama had been a radical agrarian, left of Carranza and, with his *Partido Nacional Agrarista*, left even of Obregón and Calles. Jacinto Treviño had been an outstanding *carrancista* general; Hector López had been a *maderista* general, an *anti-obregonista* senator and a *pro-callista* governor. Gilberto Valenzuela had been cabinet minister, minister to London and presidential candidate; his general political complexion was *callista*. Dr. Atl had been Carranza's publicity director, had guessed right on Obregón, Calles and Cárdenas, only to fall out with the latter and go over to the other side. Eduardo Neri had been a *callista* senator. General Iturbe had been a power in the PRM till a fight with left elements caused his expulsion. He and Valenzuela and Soto y Gama were all supposed to have aspirations to the presidency. Iturbe and Dr. Atl have both been accused of overfriendliness with German fascists in Mexico. In 1939, this heterogeneous collection of personalities had in common the cause of *anti-cardenasism*.

They announced a carefully worded platform. Its points were:

The Constitution of 1917 should be made effective (echoes of Madero and Carranza). Constitutional reforms and addi-

tions should be inspired by the needs of the Mexican people, excluding inspiration from foreign governments, institutions, parties or agitators (a hit at Cárdenas, who had played rather fast and loose with the Charter of Liberties in amending it to carry out his program—but Calles did the same). Government of reconstruction should be instituted, harmonizing the legitimate interests and just aspirations of all social classes and respecting the rights of man (a cry from the middle and upper classes, who had been taking it on the chin); private property, exclusive of large estates, should be respected (the Six-Year Planners had not stopped at breaking up the large estates; they had taken over medium-sized ranches also). A just equilibrium between the different factors of production was to be obtained ("factors of production" means capital and labor, but early in 1939 one was still rather hesitant to mention the former word outright).

The program grew more specific as it continued:

Peasants were to be given title to their *ejidal* plots. The real condition of labor was to be improved. Political strikes were to be proscribed. The use of the exclusion clause to exploit and enslave the laboring classes was to be discontinued. The Amendment to Article 3 of the Constitution, the one imposing sectarian and dogmatic instruction ("especially in view of the Marxist interpretation that had been given it"), was to be abrogated. Dictatorial regimes, whether of the left or the right were to be combated and in view of this, any "official state party is condemned, as well as any mockery of the sovereignty of the people, which is what the so-called 'democracy of workers' in the last analysis is . . ." They demanded "the integral democracy which our constitution proclaims." (Echoes of Juárez . . .

Madero. . . .) The army's pay was to be raised; the real Veterans of the Revolution (the little fellows who didn't get to be generals) were to be helped.

No matter what the motives of the men who formed it were, this platform summed up, in general, the grievances of large sections of the Mexican people. Granting the PRM the four million membership it claimed, Mexico had twenty million inhabitants in all and out of the sixteen million non-PRM members there were bound to be a good many to whom this would appeal.

The opposition was defining its program, but still it had no candidate.

On March 8, 1939, one burst upon the political scene with bombshell effect. General Joaquín Amaro issued a manifesto.

Amaro is one of the men who in their teens took to the field in the Revolution of 1910 and rose to be commanders of bodies of irregular troops through ability to lead men and maintain guerrilla warfare. He is an Indian, from southwestern Mexico, the section that has given the nation so many of its Indian military leaders; he made his name as a soldier and revolutionary fighting against Huerta; joined Obregón and was a military mainstay under both Obregón and Calles. When Calles brought the Revolution to town, Amaro came with it. The bit of color most often attached to him is that in the early days he wore the native dress and had an amulet in his ear. (It must have been the right ear, for I have checked on the left one and it is not pierced.) As Calles' Secretary of War, almost single-handed he changed the Revolutionary army from an armed rabble into something like a military organization. It took heroic methods to do it, but Amaro judged means by ends and he succeeded in enforcing discipline, something hitherto un-

dreamed of in the ranks of the valiant and brave of Mexico. When he was first brought to Mexico City and made resplendent in a general's uniform, he was shy, they say. But he hired tutors, studied, learned languages; he went to the United States and learned about the outside world. Still a young man, he is today a smooth, even polished product, with all of the force of the fearless Indian of the amulet showing through his poise and control. His character has a quality that is very Mexican and very Revolutionary and in many ways he is the country's most interesting personality.

Amaro planted the question in the first paragraph of his manifesto:

At the outset of the campaign for election of a new president, he said, Mexico found itself faced with this dilemma: continuance of the present regime or rectification of mistakes of government. "It is my belief that the good of the country demands that we fight for the correction of errors that have been committed."

Without any *palabrería*, the involved wordage that Mexican *políticos* usually obscure their meaning in, he swung into details:

"First, we must completely eradicate the communistic and fascistic tendencies and activities which, in incongruous succession, have characterized the present regime."

He has started with the editorial we, you notice, but he soon drops it. Listen to this:

"I vigorously condemn the attack upon small land holdings, because it violates our constitution.

"I condemn as well the communistic tendency in the granting of communal land holdings that has brought about a new form of slavery with an omnipotent overlord.

"I repudiate the false labor policy based upon demagoguery for the exclusive benefit of insincere leaders. If we are to save the working class from its condition of economic prostration we must root out the vicious system of labor leadership and the lack of discipline which benefits no one and which will lead us into anarchy.

"The gains that the Revolution has won for the laborer and for the peasant are irrevocable, but I condemn all confused and improper use of them. Strikes against public utilities, strikes without due legal cause and strikes having a political origin are disastrous.

"It is imperative that public works be developed along the technical lines proper to a civilized country, and that, once and for all, a halt be called to the capricious squandering of the resources of a poor nation, funds now being thrown away on public works without a program, without coördination and without a view to the future. At the same time, we must end those vices which the public knows exist and which it condemns: nepotism and favoritism.

"We must condemn as well the repeated, dictatorial violation of the federal budgets. We must demand that a stop be put to the many inflationary tendencies which are ruining our currency and that due respect be shown the resources of the bank of Mexico, the vital institution of national economy which has already been gravely damaged by official inroads. [The government was badly overdrawn.]

"All members of the judiciary must be placed in positions of respect, so that public opinion shall not continue to consider them subservient to the Executive but as the true administrators of justice.

"It is essential to condemn unconditionally—and as a Mex-

ican I condemn it with all the vigor I possess—the abuse which has been made of the governmental right of expropriation which has been employed in many cases to satisfy personal vanities or sectarian demands of the groups which enjoy official favor and not to serve true public interest. Moreover, I consider it unpatriotic to create for the nation obligations of an international character in the knowledge that we have not the financial capacity to comply with them.

“We must turn our attention to our own affairs and we must cease a boastful international policy. Let us respect all the nations of the world . . . while working modestly ourselves upon our own real internal problems. Thus we shall earn the respect of all nations.

“We must put an end to the vicious policy of good intentions and substitute therefor proper solutions of our national problems.

“In short, I consider that the ultimate goal that we must fix for ourselves is to return the country to normalcy and to sanity and to reestablish the confidence that everybody has lost.

“I believe that the preceding lines will be favorably received by the general public, because they express the trend of thought of great popular groups.

“The country needs all its citizens in this huge and pressing task of reconstruction. We must appeal to the best that is in us; to our unselfishness, to our spirit of sacrifice, to our self-denial and to our patriotism, in order to save the nation from the chaos which threatens to engulf it.”

He ended by pointing out that since he had no hopes of obtaining the candidacy of the official party, he was in a position to say the truth.

Nothing like it had been heard in Mexico for years. “I con-

demn . . . a new form of slavery with an omnipotent overlord. I repudiate the false labor policy based on demagoguery for the exclusive benefit of insincere leaders. . . . Strikes . . . are disastrous. It is imperative . . . to halt . . . capricious squandering . . . on public works. At the same time, we must end . . . nepotism and favoritism." It hit at everybody, the Ejidal Bank and agrarian administration machine, Lombardo and his sometimes overenthusiastic union leaders, the works program clique and, last but not least, it dragged in Brother Damaso, who had been rankling in the public mind since the rumors about the Guadalajara highway.

The capital and the country rocked with it for days. Cárdenas' friends rushed to his aid, organizations in Mexico City and all over the country passed resolutions condemning Amaro, the voice of Ezequiel Padilla was heard in the Senate. Amaro was a traitor, Amaro was a fascist, Amaro was in the pay of the oil companies. (It was rather suspicious, his saying that Mexico ought not to contract international obligations that it could not pay.) Amaro was in the pay of the Church, he was serving the interests of the imperialisms. In short, reaction, with hooves and horns. This was what came of Cárdenas' foolish policy of allowing free speech, one of his adherents remarked bitterly.

El Nacional, the newspaper that is considered to represent the official government point of view, found a weak place, and what a weak place it was. On March 10th, it came out with a story in black type:

"Let's tell tales, Amaro," it said. "What happened in Huitzilac? . . . Is Huitzilac loyalty? Speak, Joaquín Amaro . . . was Francisco Serrano assassinated? And who was Minister of War when Serrano was assassinated? Joaquín Amaro, answer

... and not with hollow words . . . Who killed Pancho Serrano?"

Huitzilac is the town nearest to the spot on the highway to Cuernavaca where thirteen crosses remind Mexico of the death of the presidential candidate Serrano and his friends, who were celebrating his saint's day, plotting a revolution according to the official story, when the Federal troops came for them.

Amaro had been Calles' Minister of War at the time. His manifesto made painful statements and the question that came back at him was a painful question.

Said headlines in another story in *El Nacional*:

"A Prorogation of His Civil Rights . . .

"Hold Amaro to Criminal Account in the Huitzilac Affair."

The Spanish language is very subtle; the verbs in these headlines were in the simple present tense. They did not say it had been done or that it would be done or that they wanted it done; it was a mere mention of the matter.

The body of the article said:

"Soon will be presented to the Secretary of National Defense . . . the investigation of the deaths of Francisco Serrano, Carlos A. Vidal, Miguel A. Peralta . . ." and it named the dead men.

Castillo Nájera, by many considered Cárdenas' official spokesman, made a statement that was published in the Mexico City press:

"There are legal reasons to expel him from the army, but luckily for him, he is so insignificant that no action will be taken against him."

No action was taken; he was not declared *in rebeldía*, which would have made it possible for the government to confiscate his valuable real estate holdings in Mexico City and Michoacán and at the *Lago de Chapala*; the investigation of the deaths of

Serrano and his companions is still uncompleted. But, somehow or other, Amaro began to feel that his candidacy for presidential honors was ill-timed and he ceased to push it. A boom started by his manifesto went rolling on independently and a good many people actually wrote his name in at the 1940 elections, but by that time he had let the whole matter drop.

Amaro's direct challenge and his plain speaking aroused enthusiasm not only among the politicians and the big men but among the little people whose wages and salaries had not kept up with living costs and who had various causes to be dissatisfied with the regime. They liked the vigorous, straight talk; it had the quality of *entereza* about it that appeals to the Mexican people. Like other peoples of Spanish civilization, they put personal courage above almost any other virtue.

After Amaro flashed across the sky, the shadow-parties began to come alive and to gain real memberships. They began to receive money. With Amaro out, they had no candidate.

Avila Camacho, showing up stronger as PRM candidate after the endorsement by the CNC and the CTM, was busy. On April 16th he made a speech declaring his principles and beliefs.

"I believe that the best synthesis which we can make of the social struggle of Mexico is to recognize that the revindication of the people, the guarantees and rights of the peasant and the working masses are a recognized progressive fact in reality, in law and in the conscience of the people. I declare that the substantial conquests in the dotation of land to the workmen of the field and the guarantees given in favor of the workmen and labor unions should be the basis of our economic organization.

"Once the labor conquests and the division of the land are united with the data of experience and interest in the Father-

land, they will be a guarantee of social security and the stimulus of a just prosperity.

"The development of the *ejido*, making it more and more capable of discharging its social and economic functions, together with respect for the authentic small property, will increase the production of the country and the national wealth.

"And there is no surer way to consolidate this situation than to affirm the fecund and genuine principles of the Mexican Revolution. The strict fulfillment of law and the effort to strengthen and dignify the national institutions must be the norm of the progressive march of the Revolution . . ."

After Amaro, this was weak tea. The people had been hearing this sort of fuzzy rhetoric for six years. It was noticed that neither orator nor listeners seemed to have very much enthusiasm about it all.

Said *Últimas Noticias*, commenting on the speech:

"It cannot be doubted that the gods have denied General Avila Camacho the gift of eloquence."

Eloquence, ways of speaking, personality, these are the factors that go into political campaigns and build up situations that change history. A factor in the 1939-1940 campaign was that Avila Camacho lacked dash and color.

When the Calles dictatorship had begun to show signs of weakening, at the extreme of his right swing under—or by means of—Ortiz Rubio, the four generals who had been caught playing presidential politics and fired from the cabinet forthwith were Cárdenas, Amaro, Cedillo, Almazán. The CACA, the people said, and *caca* is a very dirty word in Spanish. Cárdenas achieved the presidency in 1934 and the power in 1935. Cedillo had made a bid for power in 1938 and had been shot while a fugitive in the hills of San Luis Potosí; Amaro had

made a bid for the independent nomination and had been successfully headed off in March, 1939. What had become of Almazán?

In 1932, Calles had been more afraid of Cedillo and Almazán than of Cárdenas; I suppose he knew of a way to deal with Amaro. With Serrano, Gómez and others, Almazán had been one of the dangers when Obregón ran for president in 1928; he was known to have encouraged Serrano's hopes. After both Serrano and Obregón were dead, he took a strong stand in favor of Calles' suggestion that the next president should be a civilian. At the famous "conference of generals" when Calles put the question squarely up to them, he was voluble in supporting Calles and in disclaiming any personal ambitions for the presidency.

I quote his words as taken down by a stenographer at that meeting and reprinted in General Emilio Acosta's *Historia de la Campaña de la Columna Expedicionaria del Norte*; said Almazán:

"I've suffered a great deal since 1910 and really the thought of a new struggle alarms me; for this reason, in conversations that I have had with the President, with General Escobar, with General Carrillo, with General Carrera Torres and with others, I have said that in order to avoid a division, it would be better for the provisional president to be a civilian . . . I told the President many days ago that I was ready to sign a document binding myself to the agreement that never in my life would I have dreams of the presidency. . . ."

After the appointment of the civilian president, Portes Gil, when the dissatisfied generals organized a revolution under Escobar's leadership, Almazán stayed with Calles, as did Cedillo, Cárdenas and Amaro; moreover, Almazán covered himself

with national glory by putting down this rebellion. The "Hero of the Reform," the "Warrior of the North," he was called; popular songs were written about him, more than had been done for any hero since Obregón lost his arm fighting Villa. Almazán emerged from the Escobar campaign potentially more dangerous than ever.

He had been given, in the Ortiz Rubio cabinet, one of the richest plums that government has to offer, the Ministry of Communications and Public Works. The Pan-American Highway from Laredo was then building; Almazán had organized a road-building company, the Anáhuac Construction Company, which had the contracts. This is a well-built highway—I have confirmed this fact with Almazán's political opponents—and cost less, on a mile-for-mile comparison, than the famous one to Guadalajara, but Almazán's double personality of cabinet minister in charge of public works and chief contractor for an important part of said public works program was a weak point that the Calles high command was not long in taking advantage of when Almazán and the others of the CACA threatened his power. Almazán was relegated to a military command in Nuevo León and a government investigating committee had his contracts out for a going over. This was enough to cool Almazán's ardor and he had been quiet enough at Monterrey since. He naturally supported Cárdenas against Calles, although taking no very active part in the battle; he had supported Cárdenas against Cedillo and had retained his various government contracts and concessions.

The political reasons for the investigation had been known and Almazán's chances for the presidency, though temporarily set back, were not permanently blighted. On May 4, 1939, after Amaro had shot his bolt and while Avila Camacho was

plugging along without arousing much popular response, the *Partido Pro-Orientación Almazanista* was formed to start an Almazán boom.

There is a bit of political gossip about this party that you can take or leave. It is that this boom was started by government sympathizers to force Almazán either to renounce presidential aspirations or declare himself and resign his post of command at Monterrey, where his continued presence was holding together his potential strength with the army. If this is true, then you have the super-paradox of government-party sympathizers starting the boom of the man who was their strongest potential opponent. I think it most likely that Almazán or men close to him had the boom started; the former rather over-subtle version of the matter may have been started as a cover-up to preserve the illusion that Almazán was drawn into the race through no inclination or desire of his own.

Almazán's bid was, at first, for the nomination of the official party; he had kept very quiet during the furor over Amaro. After Amaro's elimination he was the man next in line, as the succession among the strong men of the Ortiz Rubio cabinet had gone. He had definite army strength; he had a peasant following from long ago; he had connections with business; he had conservative leanings, as had Avila Camacho. But he was really ideal for the opposition and the strongest political personality available at the moment.

Juan Andreu Almazán was born in 1891, in Olinalá, a little town in the southwestern state of Guerrero; he was the son of a middle-class family of Spanish and Catalán extraction. He began his Revolutionary career while a student of medicine at the State College of Puebla as a follower of Aquiles Serdán, leading *maderista* and organizer of the *Partido Anti-reëleccion-*

ista in the state. Díaz troops were sent to capture Serdán and they shot him; he is one of the first martyrs of the 1910 Revolution. The legend is that after his death, Almazán, through a friendship at the hospital where the official autopsy was made, succeeded in getting Serdán's heart to take to his grief-stricken family, a dangerous enough mission at the time.

When the Revolution broke, Almazán, at nineteen, went to the wars with all the rest of them. He began as a *maderista* under Carranza, fell out with the latter; took to the southern hills where he joined the irregulars that had arisen with Zapata, and became a general at twenty. He made peace with the *maderistas* and was given the army command in the state of Morelos. Zapata disagreed with the Madero government over the tempo of land distribution, and rebelled. Huerta was sent against him. Almazán, a Zapata sympathizer, was imprisoned, but was soon released. When Huerta overturned Madero, Almazán was called to Mexico City where, according to his friends' story, he was held virtually a prisoner till he took active service under Huerta; according to his enemies, he "went over." The difference seems negligible.

He was *jefe político* of the state of San Luis Potosí under Huerta. When Carranza overthrew Huerta, our young general again took to the hills of the south, where Zapata was fighting *huertistas* and *carrancistas* alike. During the turbulent years that followed, while Carranza, Villa and Zapata were marching and countermarching, Almazán kept alive a focus of *anti-carrancista* rebellion in the south, on what you might call a spur-track of the Revolution. When Obregón, revolting against Carranza in 1920, mustered all the *anti-carrancista* sentiment that he could, Almazán joined forces with him and switched to the main line.

As has been seen, he encouraged Serrano, but finally stayed with Calles; fought Escobar; sided with Cárdenas against both Calles and Cedillo; he was once suspected of entertaining the idea of making a combination with Portes Gil against Cárdenas, but nothing came of it.

In the spring and summer of 1939, as it became increasingly evident that Avila Camacho was to be the official candidate, Almazán's cause attracted more and more of the anti-Cárdenas sentiment that had been aroused to political action by Amaro's frankness. But Almazán was slow to join battle; it is agreed that he was still hoping for the PRM candidacy as spring changed into summer.

In June he resigned his post at Monterrey; on July 25th, he announced his candidacy and his platform.

He began with an Amaro-ish note: "I have always said just what I think."

In announcing his candidacy, he foresaw two dangers, he said: first, that reactionary groups would seek to use him to reestablish privileges that had been abolished forever. Second, that "the upholders of the grossest imposition that has ever been attempted in Mexico" would call his statements reactionary, fascist, and the like. Then he swung into the body of his platform. It ran as follows:

Agriculture: The peasants should be given title to their plots of land, and should be organized into coöperatives free from bureaucratic control. Small property should be protected. In the tropical industrial agricultural regions, capital should be invited to make investments, under agreements to subdivide the improved lands within a term of years. The government should finance agriculture, and stimulate private capital to do so also.

"Once agriculture is confidently and enthusiastically protected . . . from exploiting politicians, Mexico will not have to resort to importing cereals, the food of the masses."

Labor: The workers owed nothing to the leaders, he said. The State should protect the workers, but never shield nor connive with labor racketeers who, under guise of leadership, only exploited and misled. Laborers should not be herded to the polls. Consumer and producer coöperatives should be encouraged by the State, but not put under the iron rule of the politicians. The use of the exclusion clause should be regulated so that it would not be a tool in the hands of politicians. Coöperation between worker and employer should be encouraged.

Production of Wealth: Production of wealth should be stimulated by guarantees. The State should encourage basic industries, but with the idea of stimulating private enterprise.

The Judiciary: This body, "entirely corrupted," should be made elective. Centralization of power should be discouraged.

Education: Teachers, not politicians, should be in charge of the school system.

Under this division came an important clause:

"It is shameful that we have not preserved what the colonial regime left us in the way of institutions of higher learning and private charities. Instead of insuring the life of existing universities and increasing their number, freedom of thought has been attacked systematically and philanthropists have been prevented in innumerable ways from leaving legacies for educational and beneficial purposes. . . ." (Private property endowments for church schools.)

Foreign Relations:

"Neighbors as we are of the great American nation it is necessary for us to create the idea that we never shall have the

sympathy or coöperation of the American people in making us strong until there is established between that country and this a true friendship, based on scrupulous respect for our mutual rights; this will make us sincere in our determination . . . to join them and the countries of Latin America in the defense of our continent."

The Armed Forces: The army should be given a general staff; barracks should be provided for the common soldier; the greatest scruples should be observed in promotion, retirement, etc., so that the young officers would have an incentive and a chance to ascend.

"In fact, it is absolutely necessary to establish a time limit for command in the higher grades, thus making room for the new and enthusiastic generation which otherwise finds no opportunity for advancement than that offered, from time to time, by disturbances of a public nature."

Navy and aviation should be enlarged, to protect the coasts.

The Revolutionary officers should be reincorporated into the army.

The pay of the police force should be raised.

This was an advance on both the Committee of Reconstruction's program and that of Amaro: it offered positive and specific advantages to the army, capital, the Church and the peasants. It promised labor relief from the domination of the trade-union politicians.

A hundred thousand people came out for a demonstration in Avila Camacho's favor in the fall of 1939; two hundred thousand came out for Almazán and that was almost as many as Cárdenas ever mustered even in the celebration of the oil expropriations. I have these estimated figures from American observers who are, if anything, inclined to favor Avila Camacho.

The other side was not long in finding an answer to Almazán.

Said General Antonio Villarreal, he who was shadow-opposition to Cárdenas in 1934, in a broadside issued by his party, the *Centro Nacional Defensor de la Revolución*, in December, 1939:

"I'll begin by saying that till 1920, Almazán still had no pecuniary resources, as he and I both well know. Since then and until last June, he has been Military Commander in various zones, except for the short time when he was Secretary of Communications. His millions, then, he has accumulated in his position as army man or politician.

"As commander in Nuevo León, suddenly and to the surprise of all, he turned into a magnificent road-builder, in the long stretch from Nuevo Laredo to Ciudad Victoria. . . . The contractor Almazán became Minister of Communications . . . and agreed with himself that many contracts should be given to his Company Anáhuac . . . Here are his other big official contracts: the highway to Guatemala; the Military Hospital of Mexico City; the Ixcaquixtla railroad; the Southeastern Railroad. . . . It pleases Almazán also that from his genius shall arise marvelous 'cities': the 'Military City' at Monterrey and the 'Almazán City' at Coyoacán, in the Federal District. We will continue the inventory of some other of the riches of the candidate-redeemer: The Hornos subdivision, at Acapulco; Hotel Anáhuac, at the same place; the estate at Chipinque; the highway that unites Chipinque with Monterrey where they have instituted the unconstitutional toll-system; the orange groves of Montemorelos, the apartment house at No. 10, *Paseo de la Reforma*, at Mexico City; a big . . . hotel in Topo Chico. . . ."

Thus was told the story of Almazán's thirty millions, gained

under Obregón, Calles, Ortiz Rubio, Rodríguez and Cárdenas. Thirty million pesos are around six million dollars.

Almazán's followers were not long in coming back; they pointed out that the Cárdenas and the Avila Camacho families, army men and politicians, were not poor. Cárdenas' homes were mentioned; the one at Mexico City, the one at Cuernavaca, the one at Acapulco, the one at Morelia, the summer place and the hunting lodge; he was reliably reported to be interested, with a group of friends, in properties at Lake Pátzcuaro. Maximino Avila Camacho, governor of the state of Puebla, and Rafael Avila Camacho, mayor of the city of Puebla, would not soon come to want, they said. Manuel, it was admitted, has never been a businessman.

Details of some of the official family's real estate dealings have even leaked into the foreign press, whose frankness is somewhat discouraged by thought of the ever-present "thirty-three." Said the *New York Journal of Commerce* in its August 27, 1940, special edition on Mexico, in speaking of the situation:

"The Rancho Palmyra, constructed in Cuernavaca for President Cárdenas, General Suárez and General Múgica, is a case in point. On a tract of several hundred acres, rich soil has been transported from the outside, numerous fruit trees, many of them imported from Cuba and elsewhere, planted, roads constructed and some forty buildings, large and small, erected. A number of million pesos have been spent on this development, information about which is not published in Mexico. President Cárdenas has said that part of this costly development is to be set aside for a model school, but even if the whole of it is turned back to the nation for public use, it would be an extremely extravagant outlay considering the state of the Federal finances and the urgent need for railroad rehabilitation and many other pressing projects."

These things are not written about in Mexico, but they are talked about.

There were also mentioned in the discussion started by Villarreal, various troubles that had come up during the Cárdenas regime; the road investigation, the Ejidal Bank unpleasantness; something that had happened within the Irrigation Commission, when it was found that this body had been giving water intended for certain *ejidos* in Durango to private interests of the locality; there had been trouble with the Irrigation Commission over division of lands in Coahuila; there had been that bit of confusion when the *ejidatarios* of La Laguna were supposed to sell their cotton to the domestic industry at the good price, and didn't get to after all.

The discussion of Almazán's contracts and his money did not seem to affect his popularity.

I have talked to a great many people about this man, trying to find out what his popular appeal was. In the first place, he was opposition, the first real one the country had had since—well, Madero, perhaps. His career as a revolutionary, the years he spent *en el monte*, in the hills, gave him the glamour that the exploits of Guerrero and Zapata have shed upon the idea—a glamour that none of the men who fought with Carranza had. In these youthful revolutionary years, Almazán had created a sort of Robin Hood legend among the peasants and the country people, a very real one, that they still remembered in 1939. Then there was his part in the Escobar campaign, from which he emerged the "Warrior of the North" (I heard *mariachi* bands singing this song in Mexico City cafés on the first of September, the day Avila Camacho was officially designated president-elect.) And last, and to many, especially the townspeople, most important, these various business enterprises with

which he had become identified during his later years had been successful, well organized and well administered.

At the start of the 1939 campaign, then, Almazán was to Mexico a revolutionary hero who had had early, if rather vague, connections with *zapatismo*, had a recent successful military campaign to his credit, and was also a good businessman and administrator, who offered them things they wanted. Poor Mexico, tossed for a generation on the waves of civil war and political upheavals; ruled by successive administrations under which there had been no real advance in the organization or administration of the government; just at the end of a period of experimentation that had shaken the economic, social and spiritual life of the country to its very foundations . . . Mexico perhaps thought that at last, at long last, it had found its leader who would know how to show the way to the better condition it had been hearing about for so long. Perhaps it attached to Almazán a shadow-survival of the old longing for Quetzalcoatl, the characteristic that has led the Mexicans to pin their faith and their hopes, time and time again, on the promises of a man.

Poor administration, disorganization, disorientation, experimentation . . . Cárdenas' program broke old forms and old patterns, and when you break things, they are in pieces, you know. His program might have succeeded if he had had enough men of "good intentions," like himself; but he did not. It might have succeeded even with the poor administration, the working at cross-purposes, the politicking, the disorganization that characterized it, if it had had time enough. But Mexico, squeezed between falling production and increased necessity to import; between high living costs and wages and salaries that had not kept up; with an inflated money, no reserve and a deficit at

the national bank; with property rights uncertain, with capital in hiding, with political agitation entering into every phase of life, religion, business, education—Mexico could not wait for Cárdenas' theories to be worked out. If in 1939 it was still too early for History to pass its verdict on Cárdenas, it was not too early for the Mexican people to do so. It had had several years of him and it wanted a change. It believed that a new leader, one not obligated to the old crowd, a man who had managed large enterprises successfully, would bring that change about.

These are the factors that account for the enthusiasm shown for Almazán at the beginning of the campaign in 1939. The outbreak of the war in Europe in the fall of the year was to have a widely felt effect on the country and, necessarily, on the presidential campaign.

X

WAR AND THE 1940 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

MEXICO manufactures its own everyday clothes, its shoes, soft and hard drinks, cigars and cigarettes, structural steel and building materials, steel parts for railway rolling stock, steel rails, most of its furniture . . . and the bulk of the remaining manufactured necessities and luxuries of man's use must be imported. Under Cárdenas it became necessary to import corn and beans, the staple foods of the masses, and increased amounts of wheat.

Mexico's mining industry exports silver and gold, copper, lead, zinc, antimony, cadmium, molybdenum, arsenic and other metals and their by-products; with oil, these mineral products comprise from seventy-five to eighty per cent of the products that it sells abroad. The remaining twenty to twenty-five per cent of its exports are produced by the agricultural industries: cattle and cattle-hides, bananas, sisal hemp (henequén), coffee and chicle make up the bulk. Mexico also exports some cotton, in the form of cotton waste; it sells some lumber and copra.

Until recent years, between seventy and seventy-five per cent of Mexico's commerce had been with the United States and around twenty with Europe. The Nazi trade drive in Mexico, combined with the reorientation of Mexico's official government policy toward a closer economic relation with Germany and Italy had, by the beginning of the year 1939, changed the picture considerably: In 1938, Mexico bought 19% of all her

imported goods from Germany, an increase of 3% over 1937 and of 11% over 1927, the last of the big trade years before the Nazi rise to power; purchases from Italy increased from 1% in 1937 to 2% in 1938. Purchases from the United States fell from 1937's 62% to 57% in 1938.

Mexico was buying approximately 40% of all its imported goods from Europe during the period immediately preceding the outbreak of the war; in 1938, 19% came from Germany, 2% from Italy, 4% from France, 4% from Great Britain and approximately 10% from Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, Spain, Czechoslovakia and other countries of the continent. Approximately 30% of Mexico's exports went to Europe; 8% to Germany, 9% to Great Britain, 2% to France, .06% to Italy, with around 10% divided among the other nations.

Through the first months of 1939, as a result of the barter deals, the accent on trade with Germany and Italy increased; during the summer months the percentage of goods bought from these powers by Mexico went as high as 22.2% of the total (20% from Germany, 2.2% from Italy) and this was almost as much as Mexico had in former years bought from all Europe.

The Germans had been putting their goods on the Mexican market at prices from 25 to 35% under the nearest American price and the first effect of the war was to cut Mexico off from this source of supply of cheap manufactured goods. The Nazis used every means that they could devise to keep up their Mexican deliveries; they shipped merchandise overland to Italian, Danish, Dutch and Belgian ports for trans-shipment across the Atlantic. Several million dollars' worth of the machinery involved in the barter deals was sent to Genoa, and the English,

seeking to stave off the day of Italy's entry into the war as long as possible, for months allowed the Italian ships carrying these supplies to Mexico to pass through the Strait.

In spite of Germany's strenuous efforts, her commerce with Mexico came to a virtual standstill during the latter part of 1939. In January, 1940, Mexico's imports from Germany had fallen to 4.1% of the total; those from Italy had increased to 2.3%, but the combined figure of 6.4% for the Axis Powers was a far cry from their sales before the British blockade went into effect.

Mexico lost in Germany a market for base metals, hides and other exports; it lost a principal market for oil and for coffee. Forty per cent of the Mexican coffee production had been going to this nation alone.

After Italy came into the war, the means of dealing indirectly with Germany vanished; a market for oil was lost and a source of cheap supply of raw material for one of Mexico's most important domestic industries, the rayon textile industry, was cut off. The tankers that were to have helped solve Mexico's oil marketing problem had not been delivered. Marooned at Genoa were millions of dollars' worth of road machinery and other merchandise that Germany had swapped for Mexican oil.

As one continental nation after another went under Germany's control, they were lost as markets and sources of cheap supplies. In the meanwhile, exports to England had fallen from 9% in 1938 to 6% in 1939 and finally, during the early months of 1940, to less than 1% of the total.

As result of the war, Mexico gradually lost around 30% of its foreign market. The 40% of its supplies that it had been buying in Europe now had to be bought in the United States, at prices from 25 to 50% higher than those formerly paid.

Decreased production in commercial crops arising from the social experiments and distribution of the land was now compounded by loss of markets; labor troubles, high taxes and lack of confidence had seriously affected the mining industry; this situation was now complicated by loss of markets. Oil sales and oil prices had gone down after expropriations; losing European markets, Mexican oil began to find sale in the United States through the Eastern States Petroleum Company, but at prices so low that independent American oil producers threatened action against Mexican oil under the dumping act.

In order to be sure that its shrinking margin of foreign exchange would be enough to cover the cost of the corn, beans, wheat and staple necessities that the nation had to import to live, the Mexican banks in March, 1940, agreed on a policy of credit restriction that applied to the purchase of imported "luxury" articles such as automobiles, radios, refrigerators. This policy was finally adopted as a general rule, affecting all commerce. The result was, naturally, a semi-paralysis of business all down the line.

Loss of income, rising costs and credit restriction affected volume of buying, and as the public bought less, the native industries suffered. The textile industry, one of the most important in the country, accumulated large stocks of cotton goods; the peasants were patching their old clothes yet again and making them do. This industry was finally forced to reduce operation to two and three days a week. Its ability to absorb domestic cotton production decreased accordingly. Domestic production was already down, due to another failure (which has been repeated in 1940) at La Laguna.

Here then, is the background of the finale or homestretch of the 1940 presidential campaign: production of corn, beans and

wheat insufficient for national needs; sugar production down and approaching the point where importation would be necessary; hog production was down. The cattle industry was affected by lack of confidence and the expropriation of the ranches, the "small property", and cattlemen, in view of political unrest and the danger of revolution, began converting their stock into cash, which they hid away. Of commercial crops, coffee had lost a large part of its market; the sisal hemp industry (henequén), deeply affected by lack of care on the plantations and lack of capital reinvestment, with markets gone, now came to a ruinous condition. Labor troubles and the *chamusco* disease had deeply affected the banana industry. Cotton lost markets; lack of care, lack of proper administration for the coöperatives and lack of capital were bringing this industry to a ruinous condition. Mining lost markets; decreased oil production and low oil prices brought the yield from this industry to a fraction of what it had been in private hands. The railroads, already staggering economically, lost traffic. Thousands of men were idle in the ports of Tampico and Vera Cruz. The cotton and rayon textile industries were sorely affected; the keys to a number of rayon factories that had been turned over to the workers were to be sadly turned back to the government during the summer of 1940.

The peso fell as low as 6 to 1.

There was only one bright spot on the landscape, the feverish prosperity of the building trade in Mexico City. Here, street after street, suburb after suburb of new flimsily built modernistic homes began to give the nation's capital the look of a dream by Le Corbusier. It was the only field of activity that capital thought it safe to venture into.

Every other branch of Mexico's national economy needed

strong injections of confidence and of capital. The situation of the electric power industry will illustrate how lack of confidence contributed to the economic *desbarajuste*, maladjustment: consumption of electric power has increased in recent years to the point where the power production is no longer adequate; the demand is so much greater than the supply that it has become necessary to put Mexico City on a power ration. One solution that has been repeatedly advanced by certain of Mexico's politico-economists is for the government to take over this industry. In the face of such a threat, and under constant menace from the Cárdenas labor policy, capital has not, naturally, ventured in expansion in this field, although it is one where there is a crying need for the product.

At the same time that Mexico's need for capital was becoming acute, millions of dollars of funds seeking refuge from war and threats of war in other parts of the world were pouring into Mexican banks in a golden stream, there to lie idle. The Mexicans knew the money was there; it was a much-publicized fact. With the country's economic condition approaching the disastrous, they could see a measure of salvation in sight. Of course it involved the return of foreign capitalism, but large sections of public opinion that had applauded Cárdenas' action in kicking out the oil companies, now remembered that Mexico had little or no capital of its own to develop natural resources with.

Under such conditions, the candidacy of the man who represented a swing to the right, a turn toward less radical economic policies, was bound to flourish—and Almazán's candidacy did flourish, to an extent that amazed everybody, including, it is strongly suspected, the "candidate-redeemer" himself. I have seen documentary evidence, film after film, of the crowds that

greeted him on his speaking tours through Mexico. In cities and small towns, the sight was truly stirring: rivers of humanity, crowding and jostling through the streets, filling the streets from wall to wall, all come to hear and to cheer the man who they thought would bring about a change, a turn toward stability and reconstruction. It is agreed that no such popular demonstrations have taken place in Mexico since the campaign of Madero.

There were occasional incidents, also reminiscent of the Madero campaign, in which state political machines, out of step with Cárdenas' often-repeated promise that the opposition should have equal guarantees, sought to derail the Almazán express. In Pachuca, State of Hidalgo, Almazán's headquarters were raided and wrecked with machine guns; at Acapulco, the electric power was cut off the day Almazán was to speak, sabotaging the loud-speaker system that was to have carried his voice to the crowd. At Vera Cruz, all the taxis were ordered to change their number-plates on exactly the day of the meeting; the idea was to paralyse transportation. The *taxistas* obtained legal injunctions and did a thriving business taking people to the rally. At Querétaro, shrine of Mexico's constitution that is on paper a charter of civil liberties, members of the very active women's section of the *Partido Revolucionario de Unificación Nacional*, the big organization that all parties and groups supporting Almazán had merged into in the fall of 1939, were arrested for distributing election propaganda and given rides in the local Black Maria. At Torreón, capital of Coahuila, there was an attempt to break up the Almazán meeting; machine guns were brought into play and several were killed. There was trouble at the town of Zacapú, in Michoacán, at Hermosillo, in Sonora. There is in existence a photograph showing a gover-

nor of a state of Mexico on a truck filled with armed men personally directing an "interference" with an Almazán meeting. At Querétaro, pressure was brought to prevent the decoration of the balconies on the day of the Almazán meeting; as the candidate rode into the city, at a pre-arranged signal balcony doors were opened all along the streets and hundreds of women appeared, waving flags.

The women of Mexico had been promised the vote by Cárdenas; the 1939-1940 campaign was the first time in history that they had taken an active part in politics. They threw themselves into it wholeheartedly, and Almazán was their candidate-hero.

Breakdown of the promise that the opposition should have an equal chance was not confined to the provinces. There is a regulation that the commercial stations cannot allow political speeches to be broadcast, so Almazán was not permitted to speak over the radio. The PRM happened to own a radio station, however, and Avila Camacho's voice and those of his supporters were heard on the ether waves.

It was a foregone conclusion that the upper and middle classes, the industrialists, the churchgoing people, all those opposed to "socialistic" education (this includes the great majority of the women and a large percentage of the fathers of families of the humble classes), large numbers of dissatisfied peasants in the limping agricultural industries and of workers in the manufacturing industries that were hardest hit should have been fertile ground for the opposition, but Almazán drew support also from sections of labor that had been called the darlings of the Cárdenas regime.

The first labor group to favor his candidacy was that of the

railway workers, one of the largest and most influential in the nation. This defection has its history.

Mexico's railways had been in a lamentable physical and financial condition for years before Cárdenas took office. Locomotives and rolling stock were old and roadbeds were in poor repair. The unpaid interest on the bonds amounted to more than the original indebtedness. While Cárdenas and labor were in the midst of their drive for power, the railway workers, well-organized, struck for more pay and increased participation in management. The strike was declared illegal, but out of the dispute there arose a demand for nationalization of the railways. This Cárdenas did in June, 1937. Out went the loathed foreign capitalists; according to the magic formula of the moment, this was supposed to be half (or was it all?) the cure.

A government department was created to run the railways and it struggled with the situation for a year. The economic depression of the last months of 1937 brought a decrease in freight revenues. Another factor contributing to loss of income was the Cárdenas administration's new system of trunk highways; they paralleled the railways in many sections and permitted bus and truck competition that cut into earnings. How the shade of Papa Díaz, so long anathematized because his vaunted railways did not "serve national necessities," must have laughed to see the highway planners of the Six-Year Program blithely duplicating his mistake.

The situation of the railways grew worse; wrecks became a commonplace; the workers were severely admonished for allowing them to happen. The workers, in 1938, published a bitter attack on the government department's administration, charging that incompetent management and administrative mistakes had cost the industry millions of pesos. New locomo-

tives had been bought in the United States, when, said the workers, great economies could have been effected by repairing those in the shops. (Unfortunately, something had happened to the tools in the principal shops to cause them to vanish, so it is not known what the workers were going to repair the locomotives with.) Rights of way had been landscaped and the roadbeds themselves neglected, it was pointed out.

Dr. Jesús Silva Herzog, the semi-official statistical diagnostician, dived into the situation and came out with the information that high labor costs were to blame. He cited figures showing that skilled labor on the lines earned more than railway workers of the same category in the United States. High labor costs left no margin for renovation of equipment and roadbeds, he said.

In the meanwhile, within the bosom of the union, there had risen a misunderstanding. The rank and file of unskilled workers claimed that they were starving; all the high wages were going to the higher-ups, they said.

Everybody was very unhappy and Cárdenas gave the situation a typical solution: he turned the railways over to the workers. This was on May 1, 1938, not long after the oil expropriations.

Under union management, labor costs promptly went up nearly three per cent. The unskilled rank and file within the union clamored for wage increases and almost broke up the union; the union management demanded the right to increase freight rates. 1938 merged into 1939 with no prospect of improvement in sight; in fact, the outlook was definitely gloomy. Wrecks continued, trains crawled over worn-out roadbeds at a snail's pace, there was ugly talk of sabotage. Mining, in no happy condition itself, groaned beneath the rates applied to it.

In 1940, wrecks had come to be a daily occurrence and a national scandal.

Cárdenas was again forced to take a hand; he himself admonished the workers. Furthermore, in the spring of 1940, he announced that a reduction in labor costs was absolutely necessary and would be put into effect. There was nobody to give the lines to—he had already given them back to the Indians, literally—so there was nothing else to do but face facts: expenses had to be reduced.

The workers at first protested against the necessity of these reductions; increase of rates was mentioned. The government produced figures showing a deficit and a crying need of capital investment. The workers disclaimed responsibility and therefore refused to make the economic sacrifices. They blamed the administration, this time their own, the workers' administration, for incompetence. The labor administration counter-charged the workers with incompetence, irresponsibility and sabotage.

Cárdenas admonished again and set a time limit for an agreement. These orders were ignored. The manager of the labor administration and his directors were finally to resign under fire.

You can understand why the railroad rank and file were for Almazán. They had not yet tried his recipe; they had tried Cárdenas' and it had not worked out according to prospectus.

The oil workers are the second large group of organized labor who had been specially favored by the Cárdenas administration. When they were set up in business by the government in March, 1938, their situation was vastly different from that of the railway workers, for oil was the bonanza industry of the nation. Fabulous profits had been going out of it into the hands

of the owners, according to the report of the Mexican government's own statistical experts, and, of course, there is no telling how much concealed profits Dr. Silva Herzog was unable to ferret out during the dispute.

At the time of the expropriations, a national petroleum administration was created to administer and control the nationalized oil industry. The difficulties that the sales division of this organization encountered in disposing of the Mexican product have been touched on. However, confident statements showing the increase of national consumption were announced from time to time; whenever Dr. Jesús Silva Herzog found a new market for oil, the fact was hailed. Dr. Silva Herzog, by the way, got the job; in May, 1939, he was appointed to the post of director of the petroleum administration.

Exact statistical facts on Mexico's oil production and sales are very difficult to arrive at. In the first place, the oil companies and the Mexican government at the time of expropriations presented statistical pictures that were so widely different that somebody had to be juggling figures. Statistics on expenses, sales and profits since Mexico took the industry over have been something like state secrets; my written request for statistics on the wage scale in the industry, made to the vice-president of the national administration, was turned down; instead, I was offered innocuous figures showing the increase in the domestic consumption of gasoline. From official charts that I am sure the management would have been horrified to know a foreigner and a reporter was able to see, I took figures showing that the dollar value of Mexico's oil exports since expropriation had been under thirty per cent of what it had been during the years immediately preceding the ousting of the companies. Even this figure is open to question, for included in it is the

Mexican statistical experts' valuation on the dollar value of German goods involved in the barter deals, and this valuation could be extremely flexible.

But whatever the statistics, the government-operated oil industry was not doing very well through 1939. Early in 1940, the workers and the nation as a whole received a shock to learn, from Cárdenas' own lips, that it was in serious financial difficulties. A readjustment in wages would have to be effected, announced the President.

A deficit of sixty-eight million pesos was eventually admitted. This means that not only the fabulous profits of the oil companies had been wiped out, but an actual loss was sustained in operating the industry, which as yet has not been paid for. The total loss has been set at around two hundred million pesos.

The oil workers promptly disclaimed responsibility for the situation and cited figures to show that they were not to blame. They maintained that since few if any houses had been built for them, medical services had not been multiplied and their real earnings had not been increased, they were no better off, if as well off as they had been in 1938, under the companies.

Silva Herzog, one-time spearhead of the statistical attack on the oil companies and the railway workers, was now on the receiving end, for the oil workers charged incompetence of management, and cited figures.

The defending management counter-charged the workers with incompetence, irresponsibility, incapacity and ugly things like sabotage. Dr. Silva Herzog was eventually to resign under fire, with the classic statement "I am not used to dealing with ruffians." (He also said that he had left the office as poor as he entered it; whereupon the other side gleefully produced evi-

dence that the government had already paid him 20,000 pesos of a 52,000-peso payment to be made for writing the history of the oil industry.) Later, in defending himself, Dr. Silva Herzog issued what is considered a resounding "I accuse" against, of all people, Cárdenas, the man at whose side he had ridden into battle against the oil companies like a knight on a white charger.

In the spring of 1940, with difficulties and disputes of this kind developed and developing, a bird's-eye view of these two very important sections of the Cárdenas worker's democracy did not present a very pretty picture. The *ferrocarrileros* had long been *almazanistas*; as election day neared, it was conceded that Tampico and Vera Cruz, centers of oil production, were ninety per cent for the opposition also.

In the meantime, a number of very interesting things had been happening to the Revolution itself. In the first place, the status of the Second Six-Year Plan, Toledano's offering to the cause, had become somewhat obscured. Little by little the supposedly amenable Avila Camacho had worked himself loose from the limitations set upon him by this document.

The Plan's declaration of faith is worthy of note. I quote:

"The party of the Mexican Revolution reiterates its firm adherence to the ideal of the democratic state, because it deems that the only justification of authority and of government is found in the democratic ideal and that the sovereignty of the people is the only source from which springs the right of some men to rule over others. It respects, consequently, our constitutional structure and adheres to the principles that the constitution sets forth, but it repudiates, also, in an absolute manner, the purely formal concept of a democracy, since it judges that the efficacious realization of a democratic formula requires

the existence of economic and social conditions that permit the effective exercise of political rights that every citizen theoretically enjoys.

"The party recognizes, furthermore, that the guarantee of the efficacy of the democratic regime cannot be created through the free play of the private activity of man, nor can it survive if the weak masses are left in the hands of the privileged groups who have economic power, and under its protection, perpetuate themselves as exploiter. It considers, on the contrary, that only the State, the strongest community in any society, is capable of intervening to balance forces, to suppress injustices and to create . . . the pillars of a real, live democracy whose existence is not confined to simple legal precepts that are never fulfilled.

"Within a revolutionary concept, the State should be the firm upholder of security and order, but in a dynamic way that does not deny justice nor retard historic development. In order to achieve this object, the State should intervene with force to transform the structure of society.

"The Mexican Revolutionary movement . . . represents, in fact, something more than the overthrow of a dictatorship; it implies a juridical transformation which, starting with a liberal democracy, culminates in a democracy of workers, since workers are the majority who should determine the personnel of the government, the direction and the manner of its activities, the new regimes of property and labor, the tendency in education and the limits to individual rights."

The Plan's agricultural program accented further development of the *ejido*, tending always toward a large-scale system of farming within a collectivist plan. This idea was to be carried out in the colonization of state lands "and in the exploita-

tion of non-*ejidal* agriculture, in order to diminish antagonisms originating in differing forms of property." The State was to be given a "greater and greater" control over the national economy. Nothing was said about giving the peasants title to the *ejidal* plots or about protecting the small proprietor.

National Economy: National economic independence was to be consolidated and industrial production adjusted to national necessities. "The application of human labor to industrial processes will be rationalized, without involving an excessive expense of energy"—whatever that means. The system of concession-granting was to be reformed.

There was quite a chapter on mining; the general idea was that the Mexican prospector and small miner were to be encouraged; as leases expired, mining properties were to pass to the national reserve. (This was one of the first steps taken toward the nationalization of oil.) Oil was to be totally and finally nationalized.

In national finances, the rich were to be taxed more, the poor less—a safe enough formula.

Labor: "To create all possibilities for the State to carry forward the transformation of the present economic system to another that shall be organized in such a way that, while applying to the process of production all the technical advances, shall prevent social injustice and economic disorder in the distribution of wealth, especially through the aid which it [the State] shall give to the proletariat in uniting and strengthening its organization."

Education: "To define the ideological and pedagogic orientation of Article 3 of the Constitution [the one touching education] and take the necessary measures so that all official educational activities in all grades . . . shall be adjusted to the

doctrine therein established." (Extension of state control of ideology in teaching.)

Foreign Relations: "The foreign policy of Mexico must at all times defend the autonomy of the nation, not only politically, but also as regards its right to dictate all rules of a social and economic order that Mexico shall think necessary for the strengthening of its position and independence." Closer coöperation between "Spanish-American" nations was mentioned; there was no word about Pan-American solidarity or hemispheric defense.

The Army: Organization of a general staff was to be carried out; technical studies were to be emphasized. Proportional increases in the pay of the "generals, field officers, junior officers and troops" should bring their earnings up to the level of the professional classes and public servants.

The Second Six-Year Plan was less aggressive in tone than the first one had been. It went so far as to say specifically: "Since the rights of the worker are now guaranteed, private initiative will not find in the Second Six-Year Plan either obstacles or hostility. So long as it respects the just aspirations of the people and obeys the laws, it will receive all the stimulus that its status of a powerful economic factor gives it a right to." I assume that it is permissible to read "capital" for "private initiative."

Avila Camacho's speeches as pre-candidate were, on the whole, models of unspecific statement; however, as early as April, 1939, we find him going a great deal further than the party platform on the vital question of relations between capital and labor. He said:

"The workers' organizations, in exercising their rights, have acquired a clear sense of responsibility toward collaboration

in the economic prosperity of the country. Since the working masses have been assured their guarantees, the great resources of the country should be opened to legitimate investors; private enterprise should be stimulated by surrounding it with a just security, always guaranteeing the economic liberty of Mexico and the conquests of the proletariat."

Union responsibility, legitimate investment, a just security for private enterprise—these were a new vocabulary for the Revolution on the March. They sounded more like the platform of the Committee for National Reconstruction.

Said the official government party's candidate at Monterrey, on September 3rd, not long after the huge demonstration in Almazán's favor had taken place in Mexico City:

"What Mexican genius has done in this city should be done all over the country. For this it will be necessary (and fortunately the Mexican Revolution is ripe for it) to encourage the national spirit of enterprise, surrounding legitimate investors with the guarantees amply compatible with the generous laws of the Revolution." This was in Mexico's stronghold of capitalism. On October 29th, he said, in Mexico City, where the organized workers were accustomed to holding the field against all comers: "Class war should exist . . . but we must carry it on within the law, with the resolve to find the road of coöperation . . ."

As time went on, and the people of Mexico showed more and more enthusiasm for the ideas that the candidacy of Almazán represented, Avila Camacho swung further and further away from the letter of the Six-Year Plan and closer and closer to the spirit of the declarations of the original opposition nucleus, the Committee for National Reconstruction, which, after

the candidacy of Almazán was defined, merged into the hoped-for party of the opposition, the PRUN.

Almazán toured the country, hitting at administrative corruption, at the trade-union politicians and promising the peasants title to their lands. These sentiments gradually crept into Avila Camacho's speeches. Indeed, they penetrated further and the Cárdenas government itself, during the latter part of the campaign, began studying a project of law giving the peasants individual title to the *ejidal* plots. This law was to be passed before Cárdenas left office; it constituted a reversal of one of his most fundamental policies.

At the beginning of the campaign, spokesmen for the government party charged—and to the radicals of the Cárdenas government it was indeed a charge—that Almazán had made a combination with, and was receiving the support of, Portes Gil, referred to nowadays in the Mexican press as "the friend of archbishops and oil companies." Before the campaign was over, however, the "charge" was reversed: On July 1st the PRUN published in the leading dailies of the nation the statement that Avila Camacho, while taking an aggressive attitude against the oil companies in his campaign speeches, had privately sent Portes to New York to treat with them.

The Portes Gil influence, as reflected in that of Miguel Alemán, Avila Camacho's campaign manager, and of Maximino Avila Camacho, whose conservative tendencies on labor policy were well known, was thought to show up in the famous Puebla speech, at the close of the campaign. This address contained the most vigorous statement that the government's candidate had till that time made and it hit almost as hard as the opposition at some of the conditions existing under the Cárdenas regime.

In traveling over the country, said Avila Camacho, not only had he diffused ideas, he had also absorbed them. Everywhere the Republic vigorously proclaimed the immediate necessity of correcting and stamping out certain vices; the people demanded an ideological and administrative honesty in the management of the national interests. "In various regions, we have heard from the working class and the humble people, as well as the vast middle class, the cry, at times anguished, of local justice wounded by those who do not know how to fulfill the aims of the Revolution; the whole country expects solidarity from all its productive forces and its plea is directed fundamentally to the labor organizations, who with reasonable and patriotic conduct can be a decisive factor in the economic liberation of Mexico; all the nation demands clear and well-defined guarantees for the men who with their initiative and their investment can give impulse to the prosperity of the Republic . . ."

This was a blow at the politicians of the government machine and those of labor unions alike.

All nations were deeply affected by the spectacle of the war, Avila Camacho continued, the sister nations of the Americas were drawing closer, to cement on this continent a nobler, more Christian and more just international policy. As a result, Mexico was resolved to be stronger, better organized, and to have a greater creative capacity. The first object of government should be "to bolster an economy on which should rest a program of social justice in the interior and the preparation of the defensive forces of the nation which should guarantee Mexico's policy of Pan-American solidarity."

The Hispano-American solidarity of the Second Six-Year Plan had become Pan-American solidarity.

"If there are any who have given me their support who do

not share my convictions; who do not think that the road to economic prosperity is through a sense of collaboration and of national unity for all the economic factors . . . who do not consider that Mexico should respect and guarantee liberty of conscience, leaving behind forever all religious persecution, and that the national policy should exalt the Mexican family; who do not understand that justice is only worthy of the name when it is dispensed by a competent judiciary, subject to energetic sanctions if they wound or traffic with the law; if there are, among those who have supported me, any who think that there are foreign interests or foreign ideologies that are greater than the interests of the country; now is the time for them to think twice, for reflection will convince them that I am not their candidate."

Parts of this discourse hit hard at elements that had been supporting Avila Camacho's candidacy, notably Lombardo Toledano's CTM. Appealing as it did directly to capital, to the Church, to the middle class and to non-radical, therefore conservative, opinion in general, it was a far cry from either the spirit or the letter of the Second Six-Year Plan; it was, in fact, Almazán's platform, almost in its entirety.

The opposition had attacked outstanding personalities who supported his candidacy, continued Avila Camacho.

"It appears that they have forgotten that I am the candidate (*el candidato soy yo*)," he said. "So far as I am concerned, I have only to say that if the will of the people puts me into the presidency, I will be he who governs. It will be I who shall assume, with the backing of my party, the entire responsibility for an administration which I shall share with those who share my convictions . . ."

This speech, delivered on June 30th, one week before the

election, caused consternation among the helmsmen of the Cárdenas Revolution. These words—and they were strong ones—could be taken two ways: one interpretation was that the hand-picked candidate was declaring independence from his political foster father. Cárdenas himself had not been bolder or more specific in his declaration of independence from Calles in June, 1935.

XI

THE ELECTION: MEXICO TURNS RIGHT

AS ELECTION DAY approached, it was fairly apparent to everybody that there would be trouble.

The electoral law of Mexico requires that the list of voters resident in each district be published on the first of February of election year by the municipal authorities in charge of elections. Then any Mexican citizen of voting age (eighteen for married men, twenty-one for single men) can consult the lists made up for the civil district where he lives and if his name is not inscribed, he has the right to demand that it be added, thus qualifying him to receive the registration card that he must have in order to vote. After all revisions are made, a final list is published.

February, March, April and May of 1940 came and no list of voters had been published. Gomez Morin's *Acción Nacional*, a party affiliated with the *almazanista* PRUN, protested. On the 3rd of June, a first and only list was published; since there was no revision, designation of voters was necessarily arbitrary.

Registration cards corresponding to the names on the list of voters are supposed to be issued a few days before election day. The *almazanistas* charged that in Mexico City ninety-five per cent of their 200,000 voters were denied these cards.

Here is the sort of thing that happened (I quote a story published in the *Excelsior*, a leading daily of the nation, on Tuesday, July 2nd):

RIOT BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT GIVEN REGISTRATION CARDS FOR THE ELECTION OF JULY 7TH.

AN EMPLOYEE WHO DID NOT PLEASE THE NEIGHBORHOOD. HE SAID THAT HE WOULD ONLY GIVE REGISTRATION CARDS TO FRIENDS OF A CERTAIN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE.

"A good-sized riot took place yesterday afternoon in Cozumel Street, when an employee of the municipal government, J. Ramos, refused to deliver registration cards to the residents of the Roma and Del Valle civil districts who had been notified to come for their cards; when the city employee discovered that they were Almazán's supporters, he attempted to turn them away without ceremony.

"It had been announced that the registration cards would be delivered to the residents of that district yesterday at 5 o'clock at No. 9, Cozumel Street. . . . Those interested presented themselves therefore, in large numbers, and Ramos announced that he intended to deliver their credentials but that first there 'were a few formalities,' including the unconstitutional one of making them declare their political affiliation. Upon hearing that they were all Almazán's supporters, he said that the registration cards were exhausted and steadfastly refused to give them out."

On the eve of the election, the rumor went all over Mexico City that the crack flying squadrons of Lombardo Toledano's labor militia would be out to see to it that only a safe number of *almazanistas* reached the voting booths.

The women of Mexico had not received full enfranchisement, as Cárdenas had promised they should, but they had done what they could for their chosen candidate, the conservative Almazán. On many occasions members of the *Partido Feminino Idealista* had arisen long before daylight and gone out to distribute PRUN propaganda; some of them saw the inside of jails for it.

On July 7th, these women had two duties: first, to wake their husbands and sons at an early hour and get them off to

vote; second, to go to the polls themselves, by hundreds and thousands, to form a guard against the expected attacks of the labor militia.

Some of these women did not return alive to their homes that evening. Others never saw alive again the husbands and sons whom they had served breakfast to and sent off to vote. There were fourteen homes in Mexico in which there were dead children on the night of July 7th. Two others had been killed a day or two before by political gangsters who fired into a group of newsboys because they objected to their shouting "Viva Almazán!"

Chapultepec Heights is a comparatively new residential section of Mexico City where many of the capital's well-to-do have built splendid new homes during the past five or six years. This section was a stronghold of Almazán sentiment and a number of the voting booths were surrounded by crowds of women and Almazán supporters from an early hour. At the booth where General Avila Camacho was to come to vote, the trouble started early. This polling place was in charge of election judges who were allowing *almazanistas* to vote. There came a flying squadron of nearly a hundred men, identified by Mexican newspaper reporters as from the PRM; they were armed with machine guns. When the argument was over, the blood of three civilians was spilled about to vie with the brilliance of the bougainvillea that climbs over the white walls of Chapultepec's mansions . . . and the voting booth was in the hands of *avilacamachistas*.

Sirens shrieked all day long in Mexico City as this process was repeated over and over again. In many places, the polls were set up in the headquarters of associations affiliated with the PRM; here, of course, no *almazanista* could hope to vote.

At a number of voting places, the *almazanistas*, under a mistaken impression that the Mexican election law has a clause providing that votes cast at a polling place set up within twenty meters of the one designated by the municipal authorities would be legal, installed their own ballot boxes, appointed judges and set to voting. I saw one of these impromptu ballot boxes taken away by men armed with machine guns; the *almazanistas* immediately got another box for their ballots, reinstalled their table and judges and started re-voting.

I also saw peasants who had been concealed on the roof of the CTM headquarters in the *Calle Madero* rise up over the parapet and start throwing heavy paving stones down into a group of youths who were so indiscreet as to shout "Viva Almazán" in the street below. Pistol shots were fired into this group; when the soldiers came there were inert bodies in the street, men wounded or dead. I had seen much heavier and more prolonged street fighting in Barcelona during Spain's civil troubles and it was a sight ugly enough to make you despair for all humanity; but there was a wantonness and an utter uselessness about the killing of unarmed civilians in Mexico City on 1940's election day that even Spain's bitter trouble did not have.

In the late afternoon, the *almazanistas* began to gather in front of their headquarters, where it had been rumored that their leader was to speak to them. When he did not appear, they started parading through the main streets of the city. When they came to the PRM's broadcasting station, reports from the states giving Avila Camacho an overwhelming victory were being broadcast. These reports had been distributed to the provincial towns and cities by PRM headquarters before the election; unfortunately the *almazanistas* had managed to

get possession of copies and had distributed them to newspaper people in the capital also before the election, which made the whole thing look definitely fraudulent. The *almazanistas* attempted to storm the building; upon appeal from the national palace to Almazán headquarters, one of the ranking Almazán leaders was sent to calm them.

The American press was well represented in Mexico City on July 7th; the evidence of some of the best of these reporters is worth noting.

Said *Time*, in its issue of July 15th, 1940:

"Election day, Sunday, dawned bright, and church bells called the faithful to Mass. They prayed that Lázaro Cárdenas' promise of a fair election might be fulfilled—but their prayers were not even finished before the promise was shattered. The PRM flying squadrons took over polls, even flagrantly established some in their own headquarters. At ancient Convento Vizcainas, *camachistas* seized the polls, *almazanistas* drove them off, government soldiers drove *them* off and restored the booth to the favorite son. *Camachistas* foisted Camacho ballots on illiterate Almazán followers and made them mark them.

"Mockery of democracy was symbolized by what happened to President Cárdenas himself. He could not even vote at his own polls in Mexico City because a *camachista* general had closed the booth to prevent 800 *almazanistas* from voting."

Wrote Arnaldo Cortesi, in the *New York Times* of July 8th:

"No impartial person who was about in Mexico City today could doubt that public sentiment was greatly in favor of Almazán. Of about twenty voting places that this correspondent visited in all parts of the city, in only two were supporters of Avila Camacho present at all. In all others there were long lines of men, wearing Almazán's green colors in their button-holes, waiting to vote . . ."

"The biggest fight of the day, which started near the post office and was continued in the Avenida Juárez, was begun by *avilacamacho* supporters who fired on a pro-almazán crowd. This correspondent himself saw a group of uniformed army officers firing with revolvers on a pro-almazán crowd. . . . As far as this correspondent could see . . . none of the *almazanistas* was armed."

Wrote Betty Kirk, correspondent for *The Christian Science Monitor* and the *London Times*, in the *Washington Post* of July 21, 1940:

"North American correspondents covering last Sunday's elections were surprised through the day by the appeal which the Mexican people made to them. Again and again their cruising cars were approached by men and women who begged, 'Please tell the people of the United States what you see today. Just write what you see and tell them about it. We like the United States and we want to be friends.'

"The correspondents wrote what they saw and they described the great popular uprising to support the candidacy of Gen. Almazán. This demonstration came from people of all classes, with the exception of government officials supporting their candidate, Gen. Avila Camacho. Even some of these officials and the great bureaucracy of civil servants here deserted the official candidate and voted for Almazán."

This desertion to Almazán was not confined to the bureaucracy.

Wrote Jack O'Brine in the *New York Herald Tribune* under the date of July 7th:

"As the day progressed, it became evident that Almazán's strength in labor organizations was far greater than most observers had believed. Several important unions, supposed to be dominated by Vicente Lombardo Toledano, radical dictator

of the powerful Mexican Confederation of Labor, who was on record as favoring Camacho, were reported to have given Almazán by far the majority of their votes . . .

"In voting for the conservative candidate, members of the union did so with complete disregard of a warning by Toledano that those who voted against the administration's man would be blacklisted . . . and expelled from organized labor. It was also said that several thousand public employees voted for Almazán in defiance of government leaders."

Not only did the rank and file of labor provide one of the major upsets of the day by going over to the opposition in large numbers, but even labor's flying squadrons, the brass-knuckle-and-club specialists of the labor militia, were missing from the government candidate's line-up. It was subsequently circulated from the inner councils of the CTM that Toledano had countermanded his instructions for them to take active part in controlling the elections in order to teach Avila Camacho a lesson for his declaration of independence at Puebla, but this story was scoffed at even within the PRM as an attempt by Toledano to save face.

On July 7th, there remained loyal to the government machine only the PRM organizers, the state politicians' shock troops, and the peasants of the CNC. Anyone who has seen these ragged peasants being herded about by CNC officials, being led to and from the trucks they ship them around in like sheep to the places where their presence will be politically most effective at the moment, would realize that on election day they would not be permitted to cast any vote except that expressing the organization's will.

When the official vote-counting committees were assembled on July 11th, the pattern of July 7th was repeated. Many of the committees met at the headquarters of unions controlled

by the PRM; there were PRM "organizers" and machine guns in evidence. The *almazanistas* did not even attempt to have their votes counted by the official committees; they set up their own machinery, as they had done in many places on election day, and counted their ballots. The result, naturally, was a claim of victory by both sides. The official tally, announced by the PRM on July 12th was: General Manuel Avila Camacho, 2,265,199; General Juan Andreu Almazán, 128,574; General Rafael Sánchez Tapia, 14,056.

The votes cast at the impromptu ballot-boxes by the *almazanistas* were, of course, illegal. Also illegal, however, were the votes tallied by the *avilacamachistas* for booths from which the other side had been ousted. The Mexican election law in Chapter IX, Article 104, states plainly that wherever there is violence at a voting booth in connection with voting, the votes cast at that box are null and void. Strictly applied, this law would have thrown out boxes enough to make a second election mandatory.

The disposition of the *almazanistas* after July 7th was not to put much faith in legal resources. The leaders filed suits charging election irregularities before the Supreme Court, but they soon became involved in technicalities, were smothered out and lost.

In a widely quoted campaign speech Almazán had said, "If the will of the people is not recognized, I will know what to do to see that it is respected." The understanding was that if there were irregularities at the polls, he would set up his own government to contest the legality of the one established by the Cárdenas-Avila Camacho combination. This meant that the issue could be finally settled only by revolution.

Every move that Almazán made after the election strength-

ened the impression that there would be an attempt at an armed blow. Constituting his own vote-counting committees to declare his own congress elected was the first step toward establishing an Almazán government to defy the Cárdenas-sponsored one; furthermore, even before the verdict of the Supreme Court had been reached, he took a step that, for a leader in his position, was the traditional prelude to revolt.

On July 17th he unexpectedly left Mexico City for Vera Cruz, where he embarked for Cuba with a last word to his followers that he would come back within a month to take his place as their leader.

Conflicting explanations have been given for this action on Almazán's part. His followers then thought and were to believe for months that he had left the country, following the precedent set by Madero, to organize the expected revolution; more specifically, to get aid for it from abroad. It was said that he had gone to lay his case before representatives of the United States Government, then assembled at Havana for the conference of Latin-American nations. Just what the United States was expected to do is not clear; there could have been no hope of getting our government to take an active part in the electoral dispute in the face of the hands-off attitude that had been consistently maintained toward Mexico's internal affairs ever since the inception of the Good Neighbor policy. We had agreed at the Pan-American conference at Lima on a principle of non-intervention in favor of our own nationals; how, then, could we be expected to intervene for Almazán?

As late as April 8, 1940, the official party of the Mexican government, the PRM, had issued a blast at our government for what we had done in seeking payment for the oil properties. It said in part: "No Latin-American country can, in the future,

be safe in its juridical stability, and, consequently, in its freedom and in the integrity of its internal government, since at any moment the Government of the United States might pretend to revise and nullify the actions executed by any one of those countries in the exercise of its sovereignty and its freedom. In the face of the reality and the certainty of this menace, in face of the untold dangers entailed in this precedent, the robust and vigorous Spanish-American solidarity must express itself without reticence, without delay and without cowardice." How much more outraged a cry would have been raised to echo through all of Latin America if our government had taken upon itself the responsibility of militating in favor of an officially defeated presidential candidate!

At the time of Almazán's departure, some observers said he left the country because he was afraid for his life. Under the circumstances, such a fear would have been natural. He had known Aquiles Serdán, Francisco Madero, Pino Suárez, Villa, Zapata, Carranza, Francisco Serrano and his friends, Gómez, Cedillo, all of whom had died violent deaths. There had been a number of funerals for friends of his after July 7th, among them that of Col. Vicente Obregón, his personal aide.

Whatever his motive for leaving Mexico, it was seen that he went on the one train that was sure not to suffer any "accident," the one taking the Cárdenas' government's representatives to Vera Cruz to embark for the Havana conference.

The date first set by rumor for the materialization of the Almazán rebellion was August 15th, when the new congress, which was also the presidential electoral college, was to meet. It was known that the *avilacamachistas* would occupy the official building. Almazán's actions again lent strength to expectation: he made a sensational radio address from Havana on

August 12th, saying that he would take oath as president on December 1st; that, with his congress, he would represent the Mexican people from September 1st on. In addition, he called on all Mexicans to protect the "legitimate government chosen by the people."

That the Cárdenas government expected action on August 15th was plain. Thousands of armed peasants were brought in to guard the official buildings where the *avilacamachista* deputies and senators were to meet. The national representatives and their peasant guards spent the night of August 14th in the congress and few of them slept, according to eye-witnesses. When dawn came and the danger of attack seemed past, the deputies were so relieved that they behaved like school boys, cracked jokes and even played leap-frog in the august national forum.

In official session later in the day they declared themselves the legally elected congress and presidential electoral college. The *almazanistas* met secretly at an early hour of the morning and declared themselves the legally elected congress and presidential electoral college.

On September 1st, the date on which Cárdenas was to settle the matter by recognizing one or the other of the legislative bodies, this process was repeated. The *avilacamachista* representatives met in heavily guarded official buildings. Peasants were brought in to line the streets that Cárdenas was to ride through on his way from the national palace; the general public stayed at home. I watched these peasants for over an hour from the roof of the congress building that day; they were apathetic, indifferent; they did not even use their wooden clagues when Cárdenas arrived. The police guards on the roofs looked with scorn on the peasants and the whole proceedings;

it took very little conversation with them to discover an *almazanista* sentiment. Almazán would fight, I was told for perhaps the hundredth time; the majority of the police and the young officers and troops of the army would follow him.

While Cárdenas was recognizing the *avilacamachista* congress, the *almazanistas* met secretly, declared Almazán the legally elected president, repudiated the Cárdenas government, appointed General Hector López provisional president and composed a manifesto. This statement, published the next day, attacked the Cárdenas government bitterly, pointed out political and economic mistakes, named political assassinations that had gone unpunished, and listed scandals; it was the most outspoken document that had appeared in Mexico since Amaro's manifesto and signed to it were the names of the two hundred and thirty members of the *almazanista* congress, all of them men prominent in the movement and in the life of the nation. (I saw Don Emilio Madero, one of the signers, a day or two after this. "Come to see me tomorrow, I'll probably be in jail," he said blithely . . . though of course he was in no danger; no Mexican government would dare imprison a brother of Francisco.)

Leading *almazanistas* began to fade from view in Mexico City. Some reappeared in San Antonio. Some, among them General Hector López, stayed in Mexico in hiding; the provisional president wore a laborer's overalls as a disguise. Others, among them Col. Roberto Martínez, Porfirio Valenzuela and nine companions who were taken by police agents from the Hotel Canadá in the *Calle Cinco de Mayo* one evening, disappeared completely and were not to be seen again alive. It is to be assumed that they were caught "plotting rebellion" and "tried to escape", although this excuse has never

been officially made to explain the authorities' action in the matter. Higenia Cedillo, the dead Saturnino's elderly sister, also vanished; she died under police torture, it came out afterwards, and thus, no doubt, a grave danger to the constituted government was removed.

(Cárdenas said in a radio address to the nation on December 8, 1938: "It is both audacious and senseless to say that this is a dictatorial regime when political assassination has been proscribed . . .")

October 1st was set as another zero hour; enough people laid in supplies for that date to cause a slight rise in food prices in Mexico City. The word went from house to house by telephone that candles should be bought; the electric light plant, it was said, would be a first point of attack.

On October 1st, it was known that General Andrés Zarzoza, one of Almazán's oldest friends, a man who had been his "right arm" during the electoral campaign, had been killed at Monterrey, in an abortive uprising, according to the official story.

From July 7th through the month of October there were sporadic armed uprisings in Mexico in the states of Guerrero, Vera Cruz, Morelos, Chihuahua, Sonora, San Luis Potosí and Nuevo León; there was trouble later in Chiapas. There were men in the hills, ready to strike a blow, in other states. In Tamaulipas, the governor sent word to the potential rebels to return to their homes and wait till their leader came.

Where was their leader?

"I will take the oath of office as president on December 1st," said Almazán from the United States, where he had gone following a brief visit to Central America. His journey to foreign parts was stretching into months.

While Almazán was issuing confident statements from a safe

distance and the more impatient of his followers were seeking to precipitate a rebellion, several developments were taking place within his following as a whole.

To begin with, this movement had been a great popular outburst or uprising against the policies of the Cárdenas administration. On the positive side, it was a popular movement for national reconstruction. Mexico wanted things straightened out, a more conservative administration, a bit of order and prosperity for a change. On election day and for a short while afterwards while passions were at a fever heat and people were angry over the many deaths (a reliable authority puts the number as high as two hundred for the whole nation), it seems highly probable that they would have been wholeheartedly in favor of a revolution, no matter what the cost. This moment passed, however, and among the Mexican public, who sincerely wanted national reconstruction, there grew an increasing sentiment in favor of accepting the fact of Avila Camacho's election as preferable to plunging the country into a new period of destruction. One heard less about revolution; even the fire-eaters who had at first talked of arousing the populace to storm the national palace began to speak wishfully about a short, sharp blow, to be carried out by the army with a minimum of bloodshed.

Those who hoped for the army to solve the situation had forgotten, or did not know, that Calles and Amaro had invented a technique for breaking up the effectiveness of a revolt by this body. It was to send loyal garrisons to key spots; to put officers known to be loyal in charge of doubtful troops and vice versa, and to buy off the generals who were too important to be handled any other way. In the weeks that followed the 1940 elections there were at least forty garrison changes in Mexico, and

as time went on, the names of generals were frequently mentioned in connection with sums of money (200,000 pesos was supposed to be the price paid several zone commanders—and that's little enough, when you come to think of it). To others were offered, according to the inside gossip, raises in rank and junkets to foreign countries, and one or two of these rumored preferments have already been borne out in fact.

With the Cárdenas government effectively meeting the sporadic uprisings and the potential rebellion, official spokesmen and semi-official publications began to do everything possible to take over for Avila Camacho the idea that his regime would be one of reconstruction. From the time of the Havana conference on, the tone of the Cárdenas group definitely changed and again and again was heard mention of benefits to be received from coöperation with the United States, a suggestion advanced indirectly by Amaro in his manifesto in March 1939, one plainly stated by Almazán in his announcement as candidate in July 1939 and finally re-echoed, even in the face of the very unfriendly declarations made by the PRM in April 1940, by Avila Camacho himself in the Puebla speech shortly before election day.

Cárdenas could not, of course, go very far in this swing toward the right without directly backtracking on basic policies and this, in effect, he finally did. The Trotsky murder made it easy for him to change face on one of the most unpopular policies of his administration, that of official favor for the Communist Party. His public condemnation of the murder, while not a direct repudiation of this organization, was taken as an indication that the "marxists" would no longer enjoy blessings from high places and a sudden scramble to desert the radical bandwagon got under way. To illustrate how rapidly political

alignments can change in Mexico, the group of deputies who under the leadership of Alejandro Carrillo, editor of *El Popular* and understudy to Toledano, had stopped a move to outlaw the Communist Party at the opening of the new Congress, emerged into prominence a few weeks later as the Anti-Communist Bloc.

Cárdenas began to speak to labor with the new vocabulary, expressing ideas that two years before would have branded him as an out-and-out reactionary.

The railroad men and the oil workers, asked to take wage cuts, had been behaving very badly, disobeying presidential orders, and charging the higher-ups with inefficiency, ineptitude and bad faith. To them the President on July 24th pointed out that since Mexico had immense potential resources as yet undeveloped and lacked the capital to develop them with, "we must remember that there is foreign capital that at the present time could come into our country, fleeing from unfavorable conditions elsewhere . . . For this reason we must stimulate confidence in the country and its government, recognizing, consequently, that the destiny of the proletariat is inextricably bound up with the prestige and moral strength of the regime."

When you stop to consider that it had been Cárdenas' encouragement to labor and his expropriations policy that had shaken foreign capital's confidence in Mexican investments, you can see what a complete about-face he made. His statement bore a striking similarity to expressions by Calles at the time of the strike wave of 1935.

In an address from historic Querétaro on June 29th, he frankly threw down the gauntlet to organized labor, saying:

"If union leaders find class struggle more to their liking than coöperation in constructive effort, they should say so plainly to

the government . . . When the government demands union discipline, irresponsible elements within the groups take the demagogic attitude that the workers' rights are being threatened, when all that is required is solidarity on a question involving the prestige of the nation."

The communists were out of favor, the labor leaders were to be disciplined; furthermore, before he left office, Cárdenas was to sign a law giving the *ejidatarios* individual title to their plots of ground, a complete reversal on agrarian policy. The compulsory military service law, providing for expansion of the army and greater opportunity for young officers, was also passed. Laws touching education of the young were revised to introduce into the schools military training for all children under fifteen. Children who had taken so heartily to precepts teaching the necessity of class warfare and the proletarian struggle that they organized and struck for rights on their own (thousands were involved in strikes in the states of Vera Cruz and Puebla in July and August of 1940) were to be taught a new idea, that of discipline and submission to the authority of the State. One can easily imagine that young Mexicans who have in their formative years been imbued with the various ideologies thrust upon them in succession by the government policy of the moment will arrive at adulthood with a rather confused political philosophy.

The most important development in the situation after July 7th was the continued emergence of Avila Camacho, the supposedly docile pupil of Cárdenas, in the character of a helmsman for the Mexican ship of state who would steer his own course. The official president-elect did not stop at taking over Almazán's program, a process consummated at Puebla; he went further, and while Almazán issued veiled threats from foreign

shores, busily occupied himself with wooing important sections of his opponent's popular support.

In the first place, his pre-election declaration of independence had done him no harm with conservative opinion in general; it counteracted, to an extent, the firm conviction that he would be a Cárdenas puppet. A story was published in the magazine *Todo*, on September 26th, intimating that Avila Camacho in combination with "pure *avilacamachistas*" (among whom figured his brother Maximino and Miguel Alemán), would send Cárdenas out of the country on an airplane as Cárdenas had sent Calles, and it helped to spread this idea.

Avila Camacho himself, in an interview published in September in the magazine *Hoy*, Mexico's leading weekly publication, made a sensational statement, one that no Mexican president or president-elect had dared to make for a generation.

"I am a Catholic," he said.

He said in addition that the communists would have no influence with his government; that Lombardo Toledano would not collaborate; that he did not think, at that time, that Cárdenas would take part in his government.

These statements pleased many people indeed. Mexican priests, on a subsequent Sunday, commended them. The younger officers of the army, who come mainly from the conservative middle class, were pleased. Conservative labor and employers, to whom Toledano and the communists had been a thorn in the flesh for years, approved.

Some of the *cárdenistas* began to say that Cárdenas had made a mistake, that Avila Camacho would be more conservative than Almazán. Toledano, in a fire-eating speech delivered at the National Opera House, condemned the attack upon himself and communism; he said the victory won at the polls by

labor would not be wrested from them by a reactionary group who "one year ago were dogs and lackeys (*perros y lacayos*)."

As September passed, October came and went and November waned with the Cárdenas and Avila Camacho forces, in co-operation and singly, meeting and dealing with conditions that faced them as result of events of July 7th, the political situation in Mexico came to be roughly this: a part of the leadership and large sections of the popular following of the Almazán movement had come to be willing to accept the new Avila Camacho and peace in preference to revolution. They separated from the militant minority who, encouraged by the tone of Almazán's statements from abroad, still hoped and prepared for action.

In mid-November, General Heriberto Jara, president of the PRM, revealed to foreign correspondents and local newsmen details of an alleged *almazanista*-nazi plot to seize power by force; this was shortly afterwards discounted as novelesque by no less a personage than General Agustín Castro, Cárdenas' Minister of National Defense.

It is agreed, however, that the militant element of *almazanismo* in Mexico was as late as mid-November still strong enough to have precipitated, if Almazán had returned to lead them, an ugly situation involving much bloodshed.

This threat and all possibility that Almazán might prove a seriously disturbing factor in Mexico at any time in the near future was suddenly and dramatically dispelled when it was announced that the Vice-President-Elect of the United States would visit Mexico to be present at the inauguration of Avila Camacho, for Almazán's almost immediate action asking permission to return to Mexico in peace and security was taken as a rank betrayal by those who had remained ready to fight for

his cause. In one of the quick changes typical of Mexico, leading *almazanistas*, realizing that the hero of the long electoral struggle intended to yield without striking at least one blow to justify his former belligerency, turned on him with a bitterness that they had scarcely shown toward Cárdenas. By the rank and file it was suddenly remembered that the candidate-redeemer had been one of the CACA; Lombardo Toledano, who can remember as well as prophesy, revived thoughts of Almazán's various property-holdings and his thirty millions, untouched by the Cárdenas government all during the long pre- and post-electoral campaign. "*Es un comerciante*," said Toledano. "He's a businessman."

Almazán no doubt did the wise and logical thing, but a popular hero in Mexico, where personal courage is the one quality most admired in a man, cannot yield a position without a single blow and keep his status as hero. Almazán had said, on several occasions, "I will take oath as president on December 1st," and a great many people had compromised their fortunes and their lives on the strength of it; some, Col. Roberto Martínez and his ten companions, for instance, had lost their lives for faithfulness to this belief. Almazán's weak attempt to shift blame to the United States, a time-worn device below the Rio Grande, fell flat; I heard many Mexicans say, "What did he need the United States for? If he had known how to be a leader, the people of Mexico would have put him in the presidency on July 8th." (I saw Almazán a few days after his return, at his headquarters at No. 10, *Paseo de la Reforma*, in Mexico City. Looking as if he had aged ten years, tired, slightly hoarse, his face set, the fallen leader of the greatest Mexican popular movement since Madero, if not the greatest in all Mexico's history, was receiving flowers from humble followers who remained loyal;

they were lilies, the flowers you bring when you are sorrowing for the dead.)

While the *almazanista* movement was dying from the shock of its leader's unconditional surrender, Vice-President-Elect Wallace was receiving on his way from the United States border a welcome unprecedented in Mexico. In Monterrey, people lined the streets for five hours waiting for the official party to arrive; at every stop on the Pan-American Highway, there was spontaneous enthusiasm for the visitors. The ugly little incident when an organized group provided with printed propaganda full of well-known Nazi ideas stoned the American Embassy ricocheted on the organizers; disclaimed by the *almazanistas*, it was condemned by the responsible press. Mexicans have a strong national and racial pride; they were particularly pleased and gratified because Mr. Wallace had taken the trouble to learn Spanish in order to be able to speak to them in their own language.

To the Mexicans, the significance of the Wallace visit seemed to be this: it clarified a dangerous political situation that had been hanging fire for months; indirectly it settled the question of "What will Almazán do?" in a way that caused a great many of them to cease regretting the defeat of his candidacy; in addition, it was a specific act marking the beginning of a new era of friendship and coöperation with the United States.

It was my good fortune to have opportunity to talk with Mr. Wallace during his time in Mexico and it is obvious that he has an extremely clear and comprehensive understanding of Mexico's first economic problem, that of agricultural production. As a visitor and a tourist, he was charmed and delighted with the historic interest and great natural beauty of the country; as America's first agriculturist, he was much impressed with the

possibilities of Mexican agriculture. Ideas that he had formed from previous study of the subject were confirmed by his visit, among them the practicability of increasing development of agricultural industries that will key Mexico's economy in with our own. Chief among them is that of developing, in Mexico's tropical regions where rainfall is sufficiently heavy, a rubber-producing area. As Secretary of Agriculture, Mr. Wallace did yeoman's service for this project and he has had the satisfaction of seeing Congress appropriate funds to send a commission to Mexico to study the matter in detail. Success of this plan would give Mexico a new source of income from its now almost abandoned tropical agriculture; it would be for the United States and Mexico alike a contribution to the economic and military defense of the hemisphere. Among a number of other products that Mexico could produce in increased amounts to meet present or potential needs in the United States are manila hemp, rotenone, valuable as an insecticide, and quinine.

During his visit to Mexico, Mr. Wallace became very much interested in steps the national government is now taking toward increasing the total national agricultural production. He sees as a basic approach to this problem a program that would increase the yield of the lands of the central plateau that are now cultivated in corn and beans. As fertilization of the land and selective breeding of plant stocks achieve this, the lands released from the production of these staples can be put in other crops; for instance, soy beans would serve the double purpose of enriching the soil and providing a valuable commercial crop. Soy beans are a nutritive food for man and for animals; they also have many uses in manufacturing, notably as a base for plastics.

Another idea that his Mexican visit confirmed was the de-

sirability of our establishing, somewhere in Latin America, a tropical experimental agricultural station. Such a station, located on a steeply rising slope, would permit scientific study of possibilities of raising in the tropics of the Western Hemisphere products that we now import from more distant parts of the world; it would also give valuable information about methods of improving agricultural industries already existing. It would contribute tremendously to implementing our plan of finding additional markets for Latin-American products in the United States; while it would cost far less than a cruiser or a long-range bomber, it would be an important means of forwarding the economic, and indirectly, the military defense of the continent.

I was also fortunate in having opportunity to ask President Avila Camacho directly several questions bearing on matters of special importance to Americans, and I shall give verbatim his very interesting answers.

I mentioned a campaign speech, in which he had said that the economic structure of Mexico should be developed in such a way as to insure guarantees to all, to the worker, the investor and the technical expert.

How, I asked, would these respective guarantees be defined and how applied?

"They are already defined by the law and will be applied in accordance with the terms of the law," was the reply. "My government will not execute one single act that is outside legality and justice."

"Will you give in résumé your attitude toward the investment of foreign funds in Mexico?" I asked.

"The great natural resources of Mexico will be opened to private capital, whether Mexican or foreign, and it will be sur-

rounded with all legal guarantees and offered adequate economic inducements. In return for this opportunity that we offer to creative capital, we only ask respect for the law and the sovereignty of Mexico."

"What industries in Mexico offer opportunities to foreign capital at the present time?"

"All of them," was President Avila Camacho's reply. "But particularly the following: electric power, communications, fishing, irrigation, the mining and smelting of iron and the extraction of other industrial minerals."

"It is to be assumed that foreign investors will expect reasonable guarantees," I said, thinking of Mexico's strike and expropriations record. "What do you consider reasonable assurance to foreign investors?"

"Our laws are reasonable and just, and they extend this attribute to the guarantees which they vouchsafe to capital as well as to labor. I am able to say specifically that constructive investment, both national and foreign, will have legal security and opportunities favorable to earning legitimate profits."

"Would you care to give a résumé of your attitude toward export trade policies, with special reference to the question of direct exchange?"

I had the barter deals with the Axis Powers in mind, but President Avila Camacho, in answering, suggested a new thought.

"The policy of exportation of my government will be that of open door to all the world, except in case of war, in which eventuality, naturally, we will give preference to the democracies, above all when materials basic to war industries are involved. In regard to direct exchange, since the United States is so near to us geographically and is first and foremost an indus-

trial country, and since Mexico is fundamentally agricultural, it is to be assumed that a policy of direct exchange could be carried out, with benefit to both countries, on a basis of barter of agricultural products on our part for the manufactured products of the United States."

"Mexico, through adherence to the Havana Pact, has shown a spirit of coöperation in the move toward hemispheric solidarity. What are your views on the application of this principle to practical questions of hemispheric defense?" was my next question.

"In accordance with the agreement at Havana, Mexico will bring its coöperation to the concrete plan of hemispheric defense that shall arise from the coördinated points of view of the nations of the Americas," was General Avila Camacho's reply.

"The current of reciprocal interest between the United States and Mexico is increasing every day," I said. "Will you say what steps you will advocate to increase this interest, particularly in cultural and educational fields?"

"In the first place, that of lending all encouragement to the tourist movement," was the reply. "In this human interchange, which has already begun, lies the essence of mutual understanding and friendship between the two countries. I shall, at the same time, sponsor a strong editorial movement in national publications that will be paralleled by invitations to men of science and scholarships to students from the United States and other countries, for the purpose of creating a solid Pan-American friendship based on a calm and first-hand study of our people and their problems."

No citizen of the United States, I think, could ask a clearer or more specific statement from Mexico's new president of his good-will toward our country and his willingness to coöperate

with us in our aim of developing closer economic, military and cultural relations between the nations of the Western Hemisphere.

Manuel Avila Camacho, who took oath as president on December 1st in the presence of as brilliant a diplomatic representation as has ever assembled in Mexico, has no easy task as he takes over the reins of government in Mexico. He is, and will be for a time, more or less on trial before the Mexican people. They are ready to applaud every constructive step he may take, but in order to consolidate a wide popular following, he will have to demonstrate that he will give them what they want, what they turned out on July 7th to vote for and what he has promised them: a responsible administration and a constructive regime.

The problems that face the new president are many, and not the least of them is the question of control of policies. This is already being contested behind the scenes by various political cliques, in particular the *cardenistas*, the surviving radicals, on the one hand, and the "pure" *avilacamachistas*, the out-and-out conservatives, on the other.

The first major test that the new government will have to meet will very likely turn on labor policy; an indication of the attitude that will be taken has already been given by the move abolishing the workers' administration of the national railways. In order to bring to Mexico the benefits it wants and expects from the emergence of native capital from hiding and the return of foreign capital, labor will have to yield some of the rights and privileges that it has acquired through labor legislation and precedents established by the Cárdenas government's pro-labor policy. Since labor's gains in wages under Cárdenas were offset by the increase in the cost of living, these rights and privileges constitute the only real advantages they have won, and it may

be that they will not yield them readily, even on promise of an eventual increase in real earnings to be received as the economic condition of the country revives following the return of capital.

Avila Camacho has before him a task worthy of the talents of the wisest statesman, for once labor has been persuaded (or forced) to assume a less commanding position in relation to capital, his government will have the responsibility of seeing to it that the pendulum does not swing to the other extreme and that capital, native and foreign alike, does not return to the ultra-selfish practices that made it easy for radical leaders to incite Mexican labor to the excesses of the past six years. In order to do this, the new administration will have to strike a fair balance between the interests of capitalists who return to the Mexican scene to invest money and make profits and those of the Mexican people, who want benefit and development, not exploitation, from capital's return.

In this matter the American people have a direct interest, for if the Avila Camacho regime, identified as it is in the minds of the Mexican people as sponsored by the American government, institutes a Díaz-like policy under which American capitalists in Mexico are permitted to return to old abuses, Mexican labor and the Mexican people as a whole, in resenting it (as they surely will), are not likely to draw fine distinctions between the American people and American capitalists. If any government in Mexico permits any group of foreigners to bring funds into the country with the intention of taking out, under governmental protection as in the time of Díaz and during the later years of Calles' dictatorship, quick and excessive profits, it is not only probable, it is inevitable that it will provoke an eventual reaction that will sweep out the capitalists and break bonds of friendship with the nations they represent.

Woodrow Wilson, who had to determine policy toward Mexico at a time rather like the present, when the world was at war and our nation was looking anxiously to its relations in this hemisphere, made an observation on the question of foreign capital and Mexico that is as true today as it was a generation ago:

“What Mexico needs above everything else is economic help that will not imply the sale of her freedom nor the slavery of her people. The property in the hands of foreigners and of companies managed by foreigners will never be safe in Mexico so long as its existence and its methods of operation excite the suspicion and occasionally the hatred of the people of the country. I speak of a system, I do not make an accusation. The system by which Mexico has been aided financially in the past has generally tied her hand and foot and has left her, in fact, without a free government. Almost in every instance, it has deprived her people of the role it had a right to play in the determination of her own destiny and development.”

Since Wilson's time Mexico has learned several things. One is that American capital can be thrown out; that diplomatic action to prevent it can be neutralized by its influence with the Spanish-American countries; that economic reprisals by capital can be neutralized, in times of peace, by realignment of economic policies to fit in with the ambitions of European and Asiatic nations in this hemisphere. It has learned, also, from the 1940 electoral campaign, that all classes of the nation can unite on a positive program in a movement that, if not powerful enough to break the old tradition of continuism in rule, can at least force its main ideas on the regime in power.

These lessons Mexico is not likely to forget.

XII

"MEXICO'S BLACKEST CRIME"

WHY should Stalin, firmly in the saddle in Moscow, have worried about Trotsky, living in faraway Mexico, an exile and almost a prisoner? The danger that Trotsky might seize control in Russia had been met and effectively dealt with soon after the death of Lenin; the Moscow trial purge of 1936-1937 had tied up any and all loose ends.

The stalinist contention is that Stalin did not. Trotsky, they say, was a counter-revolutionary, a tool of the enemies of Russia, i.e., the imperialisms; he was a false prophet, a self-advertiser, a trouble-maker, even a spy of the Dies Committee but, after his attempt to sabotage the Revolution was stymied by the Moscow trials, a negligible quantity. In comparison with the money, strength and resources of the Third International, the Fourth International had nothing.

The trotskyist version is, naturally, very different. When Stalin exiled him to Central Asia in 1928, he would have killed him if he had dared, said Trotsky. In his last book *Los Gangsters de Stalin*, he wrote:

"In 1928 . . . it was not possible to talk of shooting me, scarcely of arresting me: the generation with which I had gone through the Revolution of October and the Civil War was still alive. The Bureau was being attacked from all sides. From Central Asia, I could keep my connection with the opposition, which was making progress. In view of this, Stalin, after vacillating a year,

decided as the lesser evil to send me out of the country. His reasoning was that Trotsky without a machine and without economic resources would be powerless to do anything. Stalin figured, moreover, that when he had succeeded in discrediting me completely before the country, he could without difficulty arrange with a friendly Turkish government to have me returned to Moscow, where he would finish with me."

This, said Trotsky, was Stalin's great mistake, for once abroad, he began to organize the Fourth International and, no longer without resources or party, was able to resist the effort to have him returned to Moscow from Turkey. Furthermore, he contended that the trials of 1936-1937 were framed to give Stalin a chance to destroy all elements of the old, the true revolution, and at the same time to force Trotsky's expulsion from Norway and his return to Russia and the power of the GPU.

The Fourth International is infinitesimally small and without resources in comparison with Soviet Russia. In 1940, Trotsky had been out of Russia for over a decade; whether his name and his ideas and his revolution meant anything within the borders of the Soviet Union during the last years of his life only a person in very close touch with what is going on there could say; frankly, I know of no such authority. However, Trotsky was far from being without weapons; he knew Stalin and he knew world politics . . . and what is more important, he could write convincingly and persuasively about them both.

Even if Trotsky was not important enough—after the Moscow trials—for Stalin to want to have him killed; even if, as the stalinist rumor goes, Trotsky's murder in Mexico was a Fourth International family affair, engineered by the Minority—still it must be a relief to Stalin to have him out of the way,

for Trotsky, with his persuasive pen, his inside knowledge, his exact, efficient and close-reasoning brain, was always sniping.

Stalin organized his elaborate trials and condemned Trotsky. Trotsky organized his and condemned Stalin; and the presence of John Dewey and men of his caliber on the investigating commission gave Trotsky's verdict a prestige that Stalin's definitely lacked. I imagine that almost all impartial opinion believed Trotsky's version against Stalin's. It must have been very annoying.

Trotsky had been one of the first to advocate the industrialization of Russia; he was called the "super-industrialist" in ridicule. Stalin expelled Trotsky and, in the Five-Year Plan, took over his idea. Trotsky cried, "My plan, my plan—and the way you are carrying it out is all wrong." Difficulties arose, serious ones. Trotsky said, "I told you so!" and he had.

Everything that Stalin did was exposed to the critical and unsparing analysis of Trotsky's brain. And Trotsky had an irritating way of foretelling what Stalin's next step would be.

Stalin would like to see me dead, said Trotsky; and members of his family, his secretaries and friends, began to die and disappear. His son Sergei, a scientist, was accused of sabotage—germ-spreading—at the time of the Moscow trials; was arrested and no one knows what became of him. A daughter in Russia was lost sight of; a second daughter committed suicide. The second son, Leon Sedow, died in Paris, in 1938, in circumstances indicating poison. Ignacio Reiss, a stalinist turned trotskyite, was killed in Lausanne; former secretaries, Ervin Wolff in Spain, Rudolph Clement in Paris—this list counts up to eight—and others closely identified with Trotsky, were killed. You really can't blame Diego Rivera for becoming a little

nervous when he realized what he'd done in bringing Trotsky to live with him in Mexico.

Trotsky, from Norway, combated the idea of the Popular Front in Spain; it was basically unsound, he said, and would fail. It failed.

When Russia started into Finland, Trotsky said that Stalin's purge had ruined the Red Army by removing its best directing brains; and the Finns did make the Red Army look foolish for a good while. It must have been very irritating. It was like a man's divorced wife telling the neighborhood all the inside story of his business and showing how bad judgment and mistakes in management were bringing the firm to ruin.

But the last straw, I should think, must have been Trotsky's stand on the Finnish question. While attacking Stalin for the failures of the Red Army, he still championed the cause of this army because it was that of a state organized on a basis of nationalized property rights in conflict with a capitalistic state. A minority within the Fourth International, those who could not follow principle and theory so closely, were in favor of Finland for the very practical reason that a defeat of the Red Army would have greatly weakened Stalin. The disagreement became very bitter. Trotsky's defense of Stalin's state against his own organization that he had built up expressly to combat Stalin's state was one of those paradoxes that would make politics, especially world politics, ridiculous and even a little comic if the game were not played with human lives for pawns.

Trotsky defended Russia against the Minority, but kept on sniping at Stalin.

While Stalin was flirting with the democracies, Trotsky prophesied that the Red Dictator would soon line up with Hit-

ler. This came about and foolish indeed looked all the stalinists who had attacked Trotsky so vigorously as a tool of the hated enemy, fascism, when he was fighting the idea of the Popular Front. Trotsky could, and did, say "I told you so" and the press of the democracies said so, too.

Trotsky, reasoning closely, dealing in theories but somehow arriving at realities, foretold the failure of the Popular Front in France. Whatever the reasons for its failure—Trotsky's may not have been the true ones—it failed spectacularly.

If Trotsky was not able to influence thought and events inside Russia, he still had a considerable capacity for making things miserable for the cause in the world at large. Furthermore, his Fourth International attracted discontented and disillusioned stalinists who brought with them information that enabled him to announce to the world just what was going on in the bosom of stalinism. . . . Little family secrets that no political party would want to see in print, Trotsky published.

The fight over Spain had been very bitter. Soon after Trotsky's arrival in Mexico in the latter part of 1937, there also came an influx of Spanish loyalists and communist sympathizers and members of the Communist Party also seeking refuge. The contestants were thus brought to close range and the issue was directly joined.

Under the plan of the Cárdenas government, these Spanish refugees were to bring to the country needed capital and technical training which, spread through Mexican society, was to have a very beneficial effect. Indalecio Prieto had millions of dollars' worth of jewels and gold—property of the extinct Loyalist government, said some—loot, said others—and the idea was to found a bank to back the colonization of the *émigrés*.

The refugees came but the bank plan failed to materialize. Most of them were better trained in political agitation than in anything else, so the colonization plan fell through. Instead, the Spanish congregated in Mexico City. Many were put in the schools, to the natural chagrin of Mexican teachers who were displaced. Others found places in the labor movement. The Mexican right held demonstrations against the Spanish refugees; it was charged that the CTM and the Communist Party had brought them in to act as shock troops and strong-arm squads. The refugees, many of them veterans of the political battles and the civil war in Spain, plunged happily into the maelstrom of Mexico City's politics; they filled the cafés and bars through which the city's political life flows, with their nightly *tertulias*, their café-table meetings.

The Spanish refugees, the CTM and the communists were all involved in the fight with Trotsky over the Mexican Popular Front idea. When the question of the Mexican presidential election began to take the limelight, Diego Rivera openly supported the candidacy of Múgica; the CTM-communist forces charged that this was Trotsky himself breaking his promise not to take part in Mexican politics. A coolness sprang up between Rivera and Trotsky. The trotskyites said it was because the Old Man tried to keep Diego out of presidential politics, since they were more or less identified; the stalinists said it was because Trotsky, living in Rivera's house, would not help pay the rent. When Múgica withdrew from the race, Rivera went over to Almazán and though the break with Trotsky was now open, the other side charged that this, too, was a maneuver of Trotsky's; it amply proved their contention that he was Counter-revolutionary Number One.

Trotsky, sniping at Moscow, took side pot shots at Lombardo

Toledano. *La Voz de México*, communist paper, *Futuro*, Lombardo's monthly, and *El Popular*, labor's semiofficial organ, fired back.

In March 1940, when the presidential campaign was at a boiling point, Andrés García Salgado said to the Congress of the Communist Party:

"The Cárdenas government permitted Trotsky to come here against the expressed opposition of the workers' organizations; this act permitting Trotsky to install in our country the headquarters of his international spy network that serves the counter-revolution, was brought about solely through the desire of these very imperialisms that our country should become a center of their activities of espionage and provocation."

In a word, the United States influenced Cárdenas to allow Trotsky to come in so that he could keep an eye on things for us. The attack was now widening to include Cárdenas, whose relations with radical labor had been somewhat strained since he selected Avila Camacho for his successor.

Continued García Salgado:

"Trotsky, the man applauded by the industrialists at Monterrey (*almazanistas*), he who gave the oil companies all their arguments against the government and the workers' organizations, is, in carrying on his work, serving the purposes of the reactionaries and the ends of the imperialisms. Comrades, let this . . . strengthen our fight against trotskyism and our struggle to have the chief of this band of spies thrown out of the country."

For "thrown out of the country" read "kill," said Trotsky to his intimates.

On May 19th, *La Voz de México* said:

"Trotsky, the 'old traitor' as Comrade Lombardo Toledano

once called him, is showing us all the while that the older he grows, the baser and more cynical he grows (*más canalla y más clínico*)."

It then refers to him as the 'spy in the pay of the reaction, the agent of the Dies Committee in Mexico,' and says that 'the workers of the country had already expressed their opinion that Trotsky should be expelled. . . .'

By this time Trotsky had moved out of Diego Rivera's house and was living behind walls that had been built up high, to a height of fifteen feet or more. There was an elaborate system of locks on the door, there were alarms all around the place; guards were on duty day and night, police outside and armed secretaries inside.

On the night of May 24th, someone rang the bell at the front gate and Robert Sheldon Harte, a young American who had only a few weeks before come to the Trotsky household as secretary-guard, answered. It had to be someone he knew; the heavy wooden door had a complicated lock. You opened a little way to see who was outside, then before you could open it wide enough to admit a man, the door had to be entirely closed and the bolt thrown over further. Harte opened the door; he was seized and twenty-five or thirty men dressed in police and soldiers' uniforms spread out all through the house and garden. Harte had been on duty; the other secretary-guards slept in a wing of the house that was across a patio from the Trotskys' living quarters. A man with a machine gun took a stand behind a big tree in the center of the garden and peppered this wing of the house—the marks run all along the wall—while others rushed the Trotsky bedroom.

The Trotsky living quarters formed a T with the main body of the house; first came Trotsky's grandchild's room, then the

room where he and his wife slept, then his study, which opened into the dining room, the main part of the building. There were, therefore, two approaches to the bedroom. The first and most direct was through the boy's room, the other by way of the library, dining room and study. The bedroom had one window.

The attackers shot through the window; one ran through the boy's room, firing; the boy rolled over between the bed and the wall; a bullet shot through his bed grazed his foot. The attacker pushed into the Trotsky bedroom, apparently firing as he entered, shot several times through each of the twin beds where the Trotskys were supposed to be, and fled, dropping an incendiary bomb in the outer bedroom. Another group that had come around through the library could not get the door between the study and bedroom open. They shot through the door a number of times. In all, eighty or ninety bullets found marks within the room.

According to the Trotskys' testimony, it was Natalia Trotsky who first realized what was happening; she heard the firing in the court where the machine gun was immobilizing the guards, pushed Trotsky, who had taken a sedative, off his bed to the floor between the bed and the wall; she then followed him and they crouched in the corner, behind the bed and a night table that stood there. They kept very still till the shooting was over. As soon as the intruder ran out, the grandchild called to them from his room; Natalia ran to him, saw the incendiary bomb and smothered it out with a small carpet, burning her hands.

The attackers took Harte with them when they fled.

Among the rumors and gossip that followed in the wake of this sensational event, which fulfilled another of Trotsky's

prophecies, was the story that he and his wife were not in the bedroom on the night it occurred; that they were at a friend's home miles away. Their salvation was called too miraculous.

Examination of the bedroom has convinced me that it was possible for them to have escaped by crouching in the corner as they said they did; the locations of the bullet holes do not preclude it. It was the obvious corner to seek cover in; to have gone in any other direction would have taken them across the line of fire from the window. The only circumstance casting a bit of doubt is that they were not sure whether there had actually been an intruder in the room till measurement of the angle between the bullet holes in the mattresses and those in the floor proved conclusively that the shots had been fired from directly above the beds. Still, it was a dark night, and if you were hiding behind a bed in a corner with a fusillade of shots going on all about you, I don't imagine you'd have your head up checking on people's exact movements in and out of the room.

The sensation caused by this attack was, of course, enormous. The communist-CTM papers treated it seriously at first, then began to cry "Fake!" and "Auto-assault!" charging that Trotsky had arranged it himself. Two of Trotsky's guards were taken in custody, questioned and released. Some minor members of the attacking gang were traced, a chauffeur who had driven one of the cars was captured. The trail led to David Alfaro Siqueiros, a Mexican painter who had fought with the Loyalists in Spain and had formerly been a member of the Communist Party. The trail also seemed to be leading to a former cabinet minister, a man often accused of being a communist, when the investigation died away. It was suddenly re-opened by discovery of Harte's murdered body buried in

lime in an abandoned house in the *Desierto de Leones*, miles from Mexico City.

In the same editions that carried news of the discovery of Harte's body, there appeared the following notice (I quote the newspaper *Excelsior*, of June 26, 1940):

"THERE ARE NO FACTS ON THE CULPABILITY OF
ATTORNEY N. BASSOLS
States the Secretary of *Gobernación*:

"'In reference to the published accounts dealing with the intellectual participation in the attack on the house of Mr. Leon Trotsky that has been attributed to the Attorney Narciso Bassols, the Secretary of *Gobernación* thinks it fair to make it clear that from the investigations of the police there has not appeared any fact (*dato*) that would give rise to a presumption of this attorney's responsibility.' Department of Information, Mexico, D. F., June 25, 1940."

Bassols had been Rodríguez' Secretary of Education and it had been he who, with the assistance of Jesús Silva Herzog, had introduced into Mexico's public schools the "scientific" education that Catholic families called "sex education." They say in Mexico that if you put Bassols in one scale and Toledano in the other, the needle would go crazy. He had been Cárdenas' Minister to France.

"It was the brothers-in-law of Alfaro Siqueiros who killed Harte," said *Excelsior's* headlines. Siqueiros, Antonio Pujol, and the two brothers Luis and Leopoldo Arenal, formerly connected with the Communist Party, were named as having taken part in the murder.

Siqueiros could not be found; he was supposed to have fled

across the border into the United States. Murderers could get into the United States but a poor writer like himself couldn't, Trotsky remarked a little sadly to a friend.

They would try again, said Trotsky. He went to work on a book that sought to demonstrate, among other things, Lombardo Toledano's "intellectual participation" in the preparation of the crime.

His house at Coyoacán was converted into a veritable fortress. A wooden pillbox was set at the street corner a block from the door; the guard outside the door was doubled. The big wooden doors were replaced by a steel one that could only be opened from a control tower on the roof. This tower was a brick and concrete lookout with slits in the walls; another was constructed diagonally across the garden from it. Windows were made smaller, bricked up from the bottom and bars were set in; doorways were reduced in size; steel doors two inches thick were hung in all openings in the living quarters of the Trotsky family. In front of the doors of the guards' rooms there were placed steel plates that were raised at night; these had slits a man could fire through. After the July elections, when the country was on the verge of revolution, construction of a bombproof room, a place where they could make a last stand, was begun. They thought that if revolution broke, they might be attacked in force and not be able to get immediate help from the authorities. This refuge was in the most protected part of the house, over the kitchen. It was a steel and concrete room within another room; a space between the walls was to have been filled with sand.

After the May attack, the hired cooks were dismissed and Otto Schussler's wife prepared Trotsky's food; they were on guard against poisoning.

It had formerly been the Trotsky family’s habit to take an occasional outing in the country; it was his one diversion. They would take a picnic lunch and drive out from Mexico City; go into the woods and make a fire and cook frankfurters. Trotsky would hunt around for cacti and flowering plants; sometimes he would load the car down with them, bringing them home to plant in the flower garden in the patio. But this practice was almost discontinued; Trotsky did not go out of the house for two months after the May attack. They knew that their enemies had rented houses in the neighborhood; there were two on the *Calle de Viena*, the street they lived on. They realized that it would be fairly easy for constant guard to be kept, watching for Trotsky to go out for a drive in the car; then a sniper could easily pick him off.

I asked if they had ever considered the possibility of treachery from within, of a direct attack by a man who would swap his life for Trotsky’s.

There had never been any treachery from Trotsky’s own people, they told me. Furthermore, he did not think his enemies had men of the “heroic mold” it takes to walk into a certain death to take a life. They would shoot him from the dark, poison him, organize a mob, pick him off from a distance, use some cowardly method. But the family was careful about strangers; everyone they admitted to the house came well recommended.

During July and August, Trotsky was working on his book, *The Gangsters of Stalin*, and spent most of the day at his desk. In the late afternoon, around five, he would go out into the patio for a while, walk about among the flower beds that were in the center of the court; inspect the chickens in their runs at the back of the court and then go and feed the rabbits. There

must have been a hundred, in hutches mounted on the wall. As he thrust the hay through the wire, they would bite at his fingers; he'd had a nip or two on his writing hand, before he began wearing gloves.

On the afternoon of August 20th, Trotsky had finished his day's work, picked up his gloves and gone out of the house. He had walked across the patio with its flowers brilliant in the clear Mexican sunlight. He had put on his gloves and was feeding hay to the rabbits.

Natalia Trotsky was in the dining room, directly across the court from the wall where the rabbit hutches are. She happened to look out of the window. There was someone talking to Trotsky as he bent down to thrust the hay through the wire meshes of the cages—a man, slight of stature, dressed in dark clothes, with a hat on and a raincoat over his arm. She did not recognize him at first, and stepped out on the balcony. Now she saw that it was the young Frenchman, Frank Jacson, sweetheart of Sylvia Ageloff, a trotskyite of some years' standing and a good friend of the Rosmers, who had brought the Trotsky grandchild from Paris the year before. It was the hat that had changed Jacson's appearance; it was unusual for him to wear one.

I sat across a little table from Natalia Trotsky in the boy Seyeve's bedroom—the room that had bullet holes all around and a scar of the incendiary bomb in front of the door of the room that she and Trotsky used to share—and as she talked to me about that last afternoon in her soft, rather hesitant French, her expressive hands illustrating every point, she made it live for me as vividly as if I had been there. It would be impossible ever to forget her courageous air, her controlled grief as she told the painful story. ("You were very brave," I said,

nodding to the scar of the incendiary bomb. "You saved your husband's life twice that night." "For such a little while," she said, "*trois mois*. . .")

When Jacson turned, she recognized him. He came over toward her, to speak to her, leaving Trotsky by the hutches. Might he have a glass of water, he asked. She said, yes, certainly; but wouldn't he have a cup of tea? No, just a glass of water; his lunch hadn't agreed with him very well. He put his hand to his throat as he said it; his throat must have been dry.

He came into the dining room and was served the glass of water. They exchanged a few words, banalities; she happened to remark on his carrying the raincoat. Oh, he thought the weather might change, he said. She thought not, she said, it had been clear all day. Banalities, small talk, the weather. . . .

He stepped to the balcony window, the one from which she had first caught sight of him, and was looking at Trotsky, over by the cages. How was Sylvia? asked Natalia Trotsky. Sylvia was the connection; they really knew this young man very slightly, only through Sylvia and the Rosmers.

"Sylvia? . . ." he said, turning toward her like a man in a dream. It was as if he had never heard of Sylvia.

But it was only for a moment, she told me; he pulled himself away from whatever the thought was that had absorbed him as he looked at Trotsky across the sunlit court. Oh, Sylvia was fine, he said—and he'd brought the article, the one he wanted Trotsky to see.

He took it out of the inside breast pocket of his coat, still holding the raincoat rather close to his body—she remembered this detail afterwards. Trotsky was crossing the court to join them and when he came into the room he asked Jacson if he was feeling better; they had known that he had been ill or ail-

ing for some time. No, he wasn't feeling so well, said Jacson. That's too bad, said Trotsky, you really do look ill, your face is drawn. There was a moment of silence, then Jacson mentioned the article he had brought.

Trotsky took it and they went into the study.

Natalia Trotsky was very sensitive to her husband's moods; they had been so close for so long, she could almost read his thoughts. She felt that he was a little reluctant to go with Jacson into the room. He had been working all day, was tired; the visitor had taken him away from his one relaxation, feeding his pets. He had seen the outline of the article a few days before, had thought it confused, trivial; an incident had occurred that had seemed a little odd. He had mentioned it to her in passing.

Trotsky led the way into the study, a good-sized room, simply furnished, with white walls and a high window that the sunlight could come through. He sat down at his desk, a plain deal table, a big one painted a light color and scattered over with papers. He kept some of the bullets from the first attack in the pen-tray. He put his gloves down on the desk and began reading the article as the young man stood by his chair.

Jacson moved around behind him, brought out the little mountain-climbing axe that he had been concealing under the raincoat and hit Trotsky a tremendous blow on the side of his head.

"I chose the pickaxe because I had found that I had a rare ability to use it," said Jacson later.

The first blow, meant to kill or stun, did neither. The old man had vitality and he grappled with his assailant, who stood above him; he cried out, grabbed at Jacson's hand as it came down, bit it; Jacson wrenched his hand loose, struck again.

Joe Hansen and Harold Robbins rushed into the study. While Hansen aided Trotsky, Robbins went for Jacson, hitting him about the face and head, demanding to know why he had done it. Natalia Trotsky ran into the room and cried out to them not to kill him. Jacson was weeping, trembling; according to all three he cried hysterically, "*Ils m'ont forcé, ils m'ont forcé!*"

According to statements made later by Hansen and Robbins, after Trotsky had been carried into the adjoining bedroom, Jacson, still shaking and weeping, said, "They've imprisoned my mother!" Later he is said to have volunteered the information that he was not an agent of the GPU.

Trotsky had had a theory that it would take a man of "heroic mold" to kill him this way. Jacson, cringing and weeping, showed nothing of this character while he was at the mercy of Trotsky's friends; yet Jacson, half sick with fear, his face noticeably drawn, his throat dry, had done it.

I asked them if they had ever had the slightest suspicion of him before the murder.

"No . . . we didn't like him," said Trotsky's secretary-guards (Natalia Trotsky spoke of them as "our friends"). "He talked too much . . . always about himself. But we didn't suspect him."

Natalia Trotsky says the same. He was *bavard*, talkative; "*banal, superficiel, pas sérieux*"; they thought little about him; he was a friend of a friend of the Rosmers; he had expressed sympathy with their movement, had given money. He had plenty, apparently. He made himself useful in little ways. They accepted him, and so did Trotsky, up until almost the last moment.

There had been the incident that he had mentioned to her in passing. On August 17th, three days before the murder, Jacson came to the Trotsky home with the outline of the article that he proposed to write and they had gone into the study to discuss it.

This was the first time Jacson had ever been alone with Trotsky in the study, the household is fairly sure. Jacson had on his hat, unusual for him, and he had the raincoat over his arm. Trotsky sat down in the chair in front of the big deal desk and took the sketch. Jacson, without removing his hat, perched on the corner of the desk. As Trotsky commented to his wife, it was unusual for a Frenchman to be so rude.

She realized afterwards that Jacson was rehearsing the crime.

Some difference of feeling about Jacson, perhaps even a faint beginning of mistrust, must have taken root in Trotsky's brain on August 17th. He had to be alert to danger to have lived his life. His wife noticed his slight reluctance to deal with Jacson on the afternoon of August 20th; after Trotsky was wounded he told one of his secretaries that as he sat down at the desk the thought crossed his mind, "This man could kill me."

The raincoat was to cover the weapons; Jacson had a dagger and a pistol with him as well as the axe. They think the hat was a sort of semi-disguise, something to change his appearance a little for a quick getaway. They believe that he thought he could kill Trotsky with one hard blow, walk out, say good-by and leave in his car, which he had turned around and left pointing toward the main highway.

The only paper that Jacson had on him at the time of the murder was a "confession" letter in which he gave as his reason for committing the crime a "disillusionment" with Trotsky because he had discovered in him "instead of a political chief directing the struggle for the liberation of the masses . . . a man who desired nothing more than to satisfy his hate and his need and desire for vengeance." Trotsky had proposed that he go to Russia to instigate sabotage, he wrote.

The Trotsky household say that Jacson had at the most only

two interviews with Trotsky alone; that in the company of others he did not discuss politics; only once, when Sylvia Ageloff was present and they were taking tea, was there a general conversation on the subject and even then Sylvia did most of the talking.

Sylvia Ageloff met him in Paris, in July 1938, when he was using the name Jacques Mornard. They became interested in each other, fell in love. He told her that he was working as a journalist; he was supposed to be a Belgian of a rich and well-connected family. She returned to New York in February 1939. He arrived in New York in September 1939, using the name Jacson. He told her that in order to evade mobilization he had bought a Canadian passport for \$3,500, part of a sum of \$10,000 that his mother had given him. He said he was to go to Mexico as purchasing agent for an English house.

He left for Mexico in October 1939, and Sylvia came down for a visit in the following January. Then it was that he had his first contact with the Trotsky menage, when she introduced him to her friends Alfred and Marguerite Rosmer, who were then living with the Trotskys.

Jacson invited the couple to dinner; they made a foursome for trips in his car. He occasionally called at the Trotsky house to get them, but always stopped at the gate, where he spoke with the guards. Sylvia Ageloff returned to New York in March and he continued to see the Rosmers. When Rosmer was in the hospital, he made himself useful. On May 28th, they were to leave Mexico for New York and he offered to drive them to Vera Cruz, where they were to embark. On the morning of the 28th, when he came to fetch them, he was asked into the house for the first time, and was invited to have a cup of coffee with the Trotsky family, at breakfast. He invited Natalia Trotsky

to go with them to Vera Cruz and she and two of the secretaries made the trip.

May 28th was the day he first met Trotsky.

Between that date and the murder, he came to the place, in all, ten times; most of these visits were short, not more than a few minutes at a time, according to the record kept by the Trotsky guards. He came once to say that he was going to New York; another time to say good-by; another time to deliver little gifts he had brought back with him—he presented Natalia Trotsky with a “luxurious” box of chocolate bonbons. He offered them the use of his car; he made himself pleasant, serviceable, seemed to be a sympathizer and even gave money to the cause. He had plenty of money; he had a splendid job, something rather mysterious, perhaps buying war materials. He talked about it a good deal to the guards, but without giving specific details.

He made a trip to New York in June. After his return to Mexico City, he wired Sylvia Ageloff that he had been ill. She came to Mexico in the early part of July. He seemed ill, she states, had lost weight, was very nervous and spent a great deal of the time in bed.

Together they went to the Trotsky home several times. The Majority-Minority split was raging; Sylvia defended the Minority in one or more talks with Trotsky; Jacson gave the impression that he favored the Majority. He would talk about it to the guards.

After the arrest, Jacson gave his name as Jacques Mornard Vandensresched, son of a Belgian diplomat, educated in Belgium and France. It was through Sylvia that he became interested in politics, learned about trotskyism, stalinism “and the other isms” [sic]. He became a trotskyist sympathizer and

knew members of the party in Paris. In the summer of 1939, he says that a mysterious member of the Bureau of the Fourth International suggested to him that he come to Mexico to see Trotsky; there was some special mission in view for him. This man’s name he did not know, though he said he saw him fifteen or twenty times. He received the Jacson passport and \$200 for the trip, received \$5,000 from his mother and came to Mexico by way of New York in October 1939. He had been instructed to wait some time before getting in touch with the Trotsky household “in order not to attract attention to myself.” When he did, Trotsky proposed a mission to Russia, where he was to engage in sabotage; Jacson wanted to take Sylvia with him, he said; Trotsky told him he could not, since she thought with the Minority. For this and because of his “complete disillusionment,” he decided to kill Trotsky. He intended to kill himself afterwards. His passport and all his papers he burned before the murder.

Albert Goldman, Trotsky’s attorney, in his booklet, *The Assassination of Leon Trotsky*, gives a detailed presentation of circumstantial evidence that he construes as pointing to Jacson’s being an agent of the GPU. In the first place, it is underlined that the motive given in the confession letter is the same as that given in several letters left by Trotsky adherents who were supposed to have committed suicide. This letter also follows the pattern of the “confessions” at the Moscow trials: Trotsky’s plans for sabotage, disillusionment with Trotsky, etc. Goldman points to the absurdity of Jacson’s staying in Mexico nearly four months before getting in touch with the Trotsky household; to the absurdity of the claim that a mere sympathizer, a man not even a party member, would be trusted with a confidential mission to Russia. He was himself in Paris dur-

ing the time when the Bureau of the Fourth International was supposed to have sent Jacson to Mexico to join Trotsky, was in touch with every member of the Bureau during that time and heard nothing of Jacson or any plan to have him join Trotsky. He makes the very interesting suggestion that if you substitute GPU for the Bureau of the Fourth International in Jacson's story and make the mission to Mexico not one to join Trotsky's staff but that of killing Trotsky, the whole story hangs together better.

He further points out that the people who introduced Jacson to Sylvia Ageloff have family connections who are stalinists. Jacson's source of money has never been definitely established; he told the girl that he was working as a journalist in Paris, but she never saw his published articles.

Jacson's real name, his nationality, his past record all remain undisclosed. The Belgian authorities have disproved his story of being the son of a Belgian diplomat. He could be of any nationality; French, Russian, Mexican, Spanish, Rumanian; I should say that he certainly has some Jewish blood. In appearance, he bears almost a family resemblance to a group of Yugoslavian revolutionaries that I used to see in the cafés and restaurants of Toulouse in 1934. He knows French very well indeed, but speaks with an accent that some think Rumanian.

Jacson's tentative identification as Salvador Torkoff, a Russian who was several years ago engaged in smuggling Chinese from Mexico into the United States, has not been confirmed. The murderer is said to be very ill with tuberculosis.

Natalia Trotsky scouts the idea that Jacson is a strong character. He was like a cringing, whipped dog immediately after he committed the crime and has burst into tears in interviews with Sylvia Ageloff . . . yet he never trips under questioning.

If you go by appearance, he doesn’t look weak. He has a rather well-shaped head, well-defined features, long nose, wide mouth and a long line of chin and jaw; you can read cleverness and treachery there easily enough. I should say that Jacson has a considerable capacity for resisting any psychological or emotional pressure that might be brought to bear on him; he would burst into tears and relieve himself that way; but his actions at the time of the murder and in the hands of the physicians who dressed his slight head wounds afterwards were those of a man extremely sensitive to physical pain.

His crime was a very Russian crime; the pattern has many points of similarity with that in Dostoevski’s *Crime and Punishment* . . . his illness before, the rehearsal, his nervousness on the day of the murder, etc.

In the hands of the Mexican authorities, who have not, of course, resorted to coercive methods to get him to talk, Jacson very quickly recovered his self-possession and some days after the murder re-enacted the scene in the study, pickaxe and all, with considerable aplomb. He has proved very difficult to pin down on facts. In Mexico there is no such thing as cross-examination as we know it in our courts; straight questioning is all that is allowed. Jacson was voluble in talking with the Mexicans, argued with them over small points with a frank and ingenuous air. When Goldman questioned him, he was very much on guard, bristled and spat like a cat. Searching questions he would parry with an “I don’t know,” and finally, after the interrogatory had been dragging on for weeks, he began to refuse to answer on the grounds that (a) he had answered the questions already and (b) the questions were intended to trip him. (!) I think you might say that he gave no information

that he did not want to give and finally wore his questioners out.

The Mexicans have had him psychoanalysed, I understand; it is also said that Jacson, who is clever at verbal sparring, enjoyed it very much.

Two bits of factual evidence have come to light. One is that Jacson once gave Sylvia Ageloff and her sister an address in Mexico City that later turned out to be a room that had been used by Alfaro David Siqueiros. Siqueiros, who during the first excitement after the Trotsky murder, wrote letters to the Mexican press from hiding somewhere in Mexico, has been taken into custody. He arranged the attack on the Trotsky house to get "proof that Trotsky was a counter-revolutionary," he has stated; he, too, talks a great deal and says nothing. He is almost jocular and has told Mexican police reporters to ask a high, a very high, government official who paid his passage from Spain to Mexico after the end of the civil war, and for what purpose. A mysterious Frenchman gave orders on the night of the attack. The trotskyites think that Jacson, who knew Harte, got him to open the door by saying that he had an urgent message for the Rosmers.

A more important piece of evidence turns on the passport that Jacson used after leaving France. It was destroyed and he has consistently claimed that he scarcely looked at it, knew nothing about its contents. However, in June 1940, he applied to the United States consulate in Mexico for a transit visa; he was going to Montreal, Canada, and in order to re-enter the United States with his Canadian passport, he had to have this visa. The number of the passport, with his name, went on record at that time. By number, this passport has been traced and it has been found that it was issued to Tony Babich, born in

Levinac, Yugoslavia, and naturalized as a Canadian subject. He died in Spain, on May 12, 1939. Jacson's photograph and name had been inserted in place of Babich's.

Writes Goldman in his book:

"Fortunately for us and unfortunately for Jacson and the GPU, the origin of the false passport used by him was discovered.

"It was a passport used by a Canadian citizen who enlisted in the International Brigade to fight in the Spanish Loyalist Army. Tony Babich, the man who had the original passport, died in Spain . . .

"Who controlled the International Brigade? It is a matter of common knowledge that the stalinists—that is, the GPU, controlled the International Brigade.

"It is a matter of common knowledge that the GPU took away the passport of every volunteer fighting in that Brigade including American and Canadian volunteers . . . and of every volunteer who was either killed in action or killed by the GPU.

"It is a matter of common knowledge that the GPU utilized these passports for their agents all over the world . . . If there were no other evidence at all, the fact that the passport comes from those who controlled the International Brigade would be alone sufficient to convict Jacson as a tool of the GPU."

Official sources say that the passports of the International Brigade members who died or were killed have vanished from official view. This is the first one that has turned up.

Trotsky knew that the blows Jacson struck would be fatal. He was conscious long enough to talk with members of his family about private matters; to leave a message to his followers to carry on his fight.

His body lay in state for days in a funeral home in Mexico City, while thousands filed past to view it. A symbolic burial was held, attended by thirty thousand people, mostly curiosity-

seekers, I think. His party in Mexico was very small and to the masses he was only a name. A move to take his body to the United States was opposed officially by the American government and unofficially by the Mexican. "The body belongs to us," said the Mexicans.

Trotsky's oversized brain that had been so active and so keen till the pickaxe struck it was saved for science; the body was cremated and the ashes will remain in Mexico. One of the most dramatic scenes that ever turned about the spectacular career of the Russian leader was at the very last, when all that remained of his mortal body was brought out of the crematory oven on a long metal tray. Cremation was imperfect, bits of bone had not been entirely consumed and these his grief-stricken followers picked out from among the smoking ashes to guard in reliquaries.

As time goes on and it becomes increasingly clear that in event of our entry into the war Mexico will become a headquarters for espionage on this continent, Trotsky's murder takes on added significance. Since the Hitler-Stalin pact, the nazis and the communists, as well as the falangistas, have a common cause in Mexico and they are working together. Only Trotsky's party sincerely opposed these elements there politically and would not hesitate to expose their activities. Trotsky wanted very badly to get into the United States; if he had cared to supply information on anti-American activities, he had the organization in Mexico to dig up details and the brain to put them together.

But Trotsky is dead.

XIII

MEXICO'S DEFENSE—THREATS TO MEXICO

MEXICO'S army is not a parade-ground army, nor is it large or well-equipped mechanically when judged in comparison with the troops of powerful nations engaged in or preparing for war; yet as it is organized and is functioning, it serves the Mexican nation, at a cost per man that is approximately one-eighth of what the United States has been accustomed to spend on its peace-time soldier, in the multiple capacity of guarantor of the stability of the constituted government, keeper of the public peace and active collaborator in public works programs. Mexico's army is a working army; on its various interior fronts it wages its peace-time campaign all the year round.

During the past twenty years this army has been undergoing a process of transformation, both in mission and in organization, from a force of revolutionary irregulars that set up and pulled down governments at the direction of its commanding generals to a national institution fulfilling the orthodox function of supporting the constituted government of the nation against its enemies. From 1920 till the present, these enemies have been rebels and bandits, interior threats to stability. At the present, with the form and psychology of the institution not yet rigidly crystallized, a further enlargement in its mission is in prospect. The new mission, for which the Mexican high command is now preparing, is defense from external enemies; since

the Havana conference, this has come to mean hemispheric defense.

To set a value on the function of the Mexican Army in hemispheric defense, it is necessary to consider what attacks foreign nations might make through Mexico.

The first opening for indirect attack arises, of course, from the country's political tradition. It may be taken as a postulate that if there should arise a determined opposition to the established government representing a substantial portion of public opinion or even a well-organized minority, there would exist the possibility that a European or Asiatic power could help to start a rebellion or civil war. Rebellion or civil war would affect adversely any program of coördinated economic defense that we might have in prospect or in operation in the hemisphere; it would alarm opinion in the United States and make it necessary for us to divert a larger portion of our armed forces to border duty; it might be the signal for outbreaks in other Latin-American countries where colonies of European powers have maneuvered into strategic position. If a disturbance in Mexico could be used to force actual intervention from the United States, it would be a major tactical victory for the other side, for it could be used as proof positive of our "imperialistic" designs, one of the chief points of their anti-American propaganda in Latin America.

A look at the map will show that Mexico is protected from direct attack from the east by our bases at Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Its greatest exposure then, is on the west, where two thousand miles of unprotected and virtually unpatrolled seacoast stretch from the United States' border to Guatemala. While the ports of Guaymas, Mazatlán, Manzanillo, Acapulco and Salina Cruz, spaced almost evenly along the coast,

are without even so much as an up-to-date coast guard emplacement to protect them, they are unimproved harbors, making it a very difficult matter for an invading force of any size to land and establish a base of extensive operations. In the first place, for an enemy squadron large enough to constitute a real danger to Mexico or the United States to get to Mexico's shores would mean that our Pacific fleet had been destroyed; and if this were the case, there would be no point in attacking through Mexico. The immediate problem arising from the exposed Pacific flank does not come from its vulnerability to invasion therefore. The source of danger, and it is a very real one, is the possibility that from small, secret refueling bases along this wild and uninhabited coast, sea raiders, particularly submarines, could refuel to strike surprise blows at the Panama Canal.

The Japanese have had a fishing industry on this coast for years; they are said to know these waters better than anybody in the world. There are colonies of Japanese who are naturalized Mexican citizens, married to Mexicans, all up and down the coast. They also own oil companies, Mexican companies, organized under Mexican law, and oil concessions in Mexico.

From the wild desert regions of northwestern Mexico, other sabotage could be organized against us. Randolph Field, Kelly Field, Boulder Dam, the naval bases at San Francisco, San Pedro and San Diego, the aviation industry of southern California, are vital points within striking distance of Mexico.

Possible danger spots of the future lie within the borders of the Mexican nation itself. If a series of great air-bases are constructed down the eastern coast of the hemisphere, one will probably be located on the Yucatán peninsula. Another point of great strategic potentiality is the Tehuantepec Isthmus, the

narrow neck of land where the Gulf of Mexico is less than two hundred miles from the Pacific Ocean. From New Orleans to Puerto México, on the Gulf, the distance is only 795 miles. Both Puerto México and Salina Cruz, the corresponding harbor on the Pacific side, can be made into first-class ports. With the present connecting railway converted into a multiple-track way and a highway built, a short line of communication to the Pacific could be established. Completion of the Mexican link of the Pan-American Highway, now surveyed to within a hundred miles of Salina Cruz, would make it possible to reach this port overland from American soil in twenty-four hours, and this port, it must be remembered, is halfway between San Diego and the Panama Canal. This port, though not so large as Magdalena Bay or Acapulco, both of which have been discussed as possible naval bases on the Pacific, can with dredging and improvement be made into an adequate refueling station to which oil from the fields on the eastern side of the Isthmus can be plentifully supplied by pipeline. These developments, within the framework of a military alliance with Mexico, are judged to be inevitable in any long-time plan for coördinated defense of the hemisphere.

Scattered through the state of Chiapas, southward from the narrowest part of the Isthmus to the Guatemalan border there is a large settlement of Germans, the coffee planters. Many are naturalized Mexicans, married to Mexican women. In this region, where roads are scarce and communications difficult, the Francisco Sarabia company operates 6,470 kilometers of air-lines, partially manned by Germans who are naturalized Mexican citizens. Across the Guatemalan border, where Jorge Ubico has a fascist-type dictatorship established, there is an-

other large colony of Germans. From among these elements, sabotage could be developed.

With the United States engaged in a war, either in Europe or the East, the whole Mexican nation, by geographic position, will assume strategic importance, for it will be a nearby source to supplement our supply of many metals and minerals vital to our war industries. In this event, every mine, every oil field, every railroad and every road in Mexico would have its place in hemispheric defense.

From these considerations it can be assumed that the part Mexico's army would be assigned in a general plan of defense for the Western Hemisphere would coincide roughly with the present functions it has in the life of the nation, those of insuring the stability of the existing government, preventing armed revolution and policing the interior of the country.

Though armed revolt in Mexico has not been successful since Obregón, when the United States adopted a policy of denying the sale of arms to Mexican rebels, this is in itself no guarantee that if a serious political division were to arise in Mexico and one side could get the effective backing of foreign powers desiring a disruption of the peace there, part of the army might not be tempted to join a revolt. If this situation were to present itself, the question of the loyalty of the army would depend on the extent to which the idea of the duty of the individual to remain loyal to the institution as a whole in its mission as defender of the constituted government has prevailed over the old tradition of imposing the political leadership of an individual by force.

There is no doubt that the institution has gone a long way toward adopting the former idea. This evolution has, since

Calles' time, been consciously encouraged by government policy.

Mexico's army of today is, in every sense of the word, a new institution; the break with the old Díaz army, begun when this ornamental body disintegrated before the impact of the Madero movement and went over to it, was completed when the reactionary elements that had reassembled around Huerta were defeated and dispersed by Carranza.

Carranza's Constitutionalist army of eighty thousand men was in fact a combination of several armies, held together by the common agreement of the chiefs in the desire to overthrow Huerta. The idea that held the units together was that of personal loyalty to a chief. Rank and promotion depended directly on pleasing the chief. Enrollment was voluntary and informal. Equipment was heterogeneous; there was no regulation uniform. Though there were some trained Díaz officers scattered throughout the various corps, tactics were on the whole pragmatic and unorthodox. These armies lived off the country. Their number rose and fell with the temperature of the political moment. They were, in fact, little more than loosely organized forces of irregulars.

This body's evolution toward a line army has been due in part to the education of the officers in military science, in orthodox methods of organization and discipline and, along with it, education to the idea of the army as servant, rather than creator of, the State. This would have been interminably slow if it had not been paralleled by other processes, namely: the elimination, by a series of purges, of the officers who followed the revolutionary idea of the army as an instrument to impose political leadership; and the establishment of precedents of success

and advantage for the elements that remained loyal to the constituted government when there were rebellions.

The first of these purges came soon after the victory over Huerta, when Villa separated from the main body of the Constitutionalist army, and the process of evolution by education began soon afterwards. While Carranza was giving the government an organized form, Obregón began to organize the army. An important step, taken in 1917, was the founding of the *Academia de Estado Mayor*, a school staffed by men who had received technical training under Díaz. In 1920, this school was converted into the *Colegio Militar*, the time of instruction increased from eighteen months to three years and separate courses established for infantry, cavalry and artillery.

In 1923, the second purge took place, when the de la Huerta rebellion was put down. Many of the officers who supported him were shot, many others went into exile and the way was cleared for the young officers coming from the military school. A better educated body of officers made it possible for stricter norms of discipline to be imposed on the men.

Under Calles, Secretary of War Joaquín Amaro began to whip the rank and file into shape. Recruiting standards were raised and an effort made to improve the equipment and the living conditions of the men. Creation of morale began.

In 1924, the nation was divided into thirty-three small military zones and a policy of shifting commands was begun. This served to prevent any individual general from establishing personal influence with too large a sector of the army. In 1925, Mexico began to send military commissions to France, Spain, Italy and the United States to study. Upon return, these officers acted as instructors and advisers to the command.

In 1926, the first step toward creation of a general staff was

taken when the *Comisión de Estudios Militares* was created.

In 1927, another purge took place when Generals Serrano, Gómez, Aguirre and Amado were unsuccessful in a plan to revolt and, with a large number of adherents, were eliminated.

But the old revolutionary pattern persisted, and in 1929 General Escobar, in Coahuila, in agreement with Manso in Sonora and Caveo in Chihuahua, attempted to form a new revolutionary triumvirate of the north. Defeat by loyal forces under Almazán, Cárdenas, Cedillo and Miguel Acosta provided another precedent in which loyal officers won over and eliminated those who acted on the principle of changing the government by military force.

Use of the army to put down the Catholic rebellions in the States of Jalisco and Michoacán under Calles offered opportunities that demonstrated to commanding generals the advantages of remaining loyal to the constituted government.

In the early 30's, the process of evolution by education was speeded up. At the same time, an attempt to give the army a standardized equipment was begun with the remodeling of the old Díaz arms factory at Mexico City and improvements in Mexico's small powder and munitions factories.

In 1932, the *Escuela Superior de Guerra*, Mexico's War College, was organized. The *Comisión de Estudios Militares* was strengthened and given the best technical brains the army had developed. Soon after, the *Escuela de Aplicación* was organized for infantry, artillery, cavalry and engineers. These are advanced courses for captains about to be promoted and young majors, similar to our branch schools. In 1935 infantry officers below the rank of colonel were given an examination and those who did not pass were put on the list for the schools. Courses of study for non-commissioned officers were instituted. In 1936,

the promotion of field and junior officers was made on the basis of an examination formulated by the *Comisión de Estudios Militares*. In 1937 it was made unlawful for a commissioned officer to have a civilian occupation as well. It had been found that police duty in remote districts required a large number of junior officers, more than the schools were producing, and in 1937, the *Centro de Instrucción de Jefes y Oficiales* was created to prepare men who had proved merit as non-commissioned officers for service as officers. Thus as in the old Revolutionary Army, it is now possible for an enlisted man to reach the higher ranks, but the modern route of advancement is by proving capacity to take education and technical training rather than through ability to please a chief.

This process of education has gradually been changing the psychology of the younger officers from that of the irregular revolutionary to that of the soldier of the line. But the quick and arbitrary promotions of the Revolutionary years have left a large number of men in the higher ranks who are still as much politicians as soldiers. The Cárdenas government passed a law reducing the time of active service for these officers from 35 to 25 years and a large number went on the retired list. For political reasons, they were recalled in 1939, but the law still exists and can be put into effect after the political crisis is entirely passed.

In 1938, the office of Secretary of War was changed to that of National Defense and the duties of the department became more purely administrative; the *Comisión de Estudios Militares* was changed to the *Dirección Técnica Militar*, to supply technical advice and planning. An orthodox general staff will be organized in the near future.

In the 1939-1940 presidential elections, army officers were

permitted to take part in the campaigns of both candidates; it was, of course, almost an army family affair. The PRM had a well-organized military sector and thirty-four officers of the active list were given extended leave to campaign for Almazán. But Avila Camacho has stated repeatedly (and his restatement of it in his inaugural address received applause) that the political activity of army officers will be discouraged. The "military sector" of the new congress has already merged into the "popular sector."

Mexico's combat troops at present number around 42,000 men; another 10,000 are included in administrative and service corps. Fifty battalions of infantry, totaling 20,000 men, and forty cavalry regiments, numbering 16,000, two artillery regiments, two sapper battalions, seven aviation squadrons and an experimental anti-aircraft battery and tank corps make up the effectives. The infantry is equipped with a Mauser-type rifle manufactured in the old rifle factory at Mexico City; improvements in the gun have been made, of course, and its use is a step forward in the standardization of equipment. Each infantry squad has a light machine gun, the Mendoza, product of a Mexican inventor, also manufactured at the national arms factory. A heavier 7-mm. Mendoza machine gun and 60-mm. Brandt mortars are part of infantry equipment. The artillery, which is permanently stationed at the national capital, formerly used French 75's but these are now being displaced by an American gun.

These forces have not since the Escobar rebellion in 1929 been organized in the conventional divisions, but are distributed throughout the country's thirty-three military zones in the proportions that the local situations and the nature of the terrain demand. Within the military zones, they are divided

among the principal towns. Two-thirds of each regiment is then sent on tours of duty among smaller towns, for protection of trains, bridges and highways. The section remaining at the base is occupied with parade-ground training and construction work. Mexico's soldiers build their own barracks, hospitals and parade grounds; they build and repair roads and bridges; and have helped build many rural schoolhouses.

The exact statistical picture of the present military effectives of the Mexican army would not give a correct idea of its potential value in hemispheric defense, since the problems of defense that it will have to meet in its "theater of war" are not those of an invasion in force. It is, however, part of the plan of Mexico's national defense to develop the army in such a manner that it will provide an effective bulwark against any threat to the nation, even a theoretical invasion.

A first step will be the introduction of compulsory military service. The law establishing it has been passed and first "classes" will be called up in 1942. As Mexico's economic resources permit, the number of the army will be increased, and additional artillery and aviation units will be organized. (Mexico has 307 airports, 68 of which are under military control.) It is not considered advisable to go forward too rapidly with the mechanization of the forces; the foot-soldier and the horse have an advantage in Mexico's rough terrain.

Compulsory military training will serve hemispheric defense in two important particulars, according to belief in high army circles in Mexico. It will create a trained reserve that can be quickly called into service against invaders, revolutionaries and saboteurs. Second, and equally important, the training is expected to inculcate in Mexico's young manhood a clearer conception of duty to the nation, thus creating a psychological

bulwark against subversive influences. A third beneficial effect that can be expected from enlargement of Mexico's army would be to give the young officers a chance for activity and advancement, a factor that would materially lessen the probabilities that dissatisfaction among them could lead to participation in an attempt at rebellion.

"I'll make of this continent of half-breeds a German dominion," said Hitler, speaking of Latin America to Hermann Rauschning . . . and then he was so imprudent as to allow the Number One Nazi of Danzig to live to turn against him and broadcast it to the world.

It was really not necessary for Hitler to put it into words, however; since his rise to power German activities in Latin America have spoken eloquently enough of this purpose, and nowhere else so eloquently as in Mexico.

The Germans have been interested in Mexico for a long time, and as far back as Díaz' reign made a healthy effort to edge in on a situation pretty well dominated by the English and the Americans by lending Limantour, Díaz' financial wizard, funds to work his magic with. Before the first World War, they tried to get rights to lines of transportation between Puerto México and Salina Cruz, the potential short line of communications to the Pacific. They schemed to win Huerta from the warm embrace of the American capitalists and Huerta was willing enough to entertain their propositions after Woodrow Wilson's policy toward Mexico superseded Henry Lane Wilson's. They tried the same with Carranza who, if he did not fall in with their suggestion of backing a war to get back Texas, at least sided with his enemy Huerta in condemning the shelling of Vera Cruz in 1914, refused to cooperate with

the United States in suppressing the raids of his enemy, Villa, and made as much trouble as he could for the oil companies. His chief of propaganda, a Mexican-Italian who has taken the Aztec name "Dr. Atl," was during his time and subsequently under Cárdenas, noted for his anti-American utterances.

Following defeat in the World War, German activities in Mexico lost their impetus for a few years, though they held ground gained commercially, supplying the nation with around eight per cent of its imports. Germans established in Mexico have never lost an opportunity to extend their commercial system throughout the country, and during the depression years when many American firms withdrew from the Mexican market, they began to widen their connections, especially in the hardware, chemical and household supply trades, even though profits were for the time negligible or non-existent.

When Hitler launched his program of commercial conquest, the German trade effort in Mexico began to receive strong government backing, with the result that German sales to Mexico had doubled and were well on the way to tripling when the British blockade went into effect in the fall of 1939.

The nazi attack was multiple; they took advantage of every opening to cut into the trade of their chief competitor, the United States. Government subsidy, through the aski mark system, provided formidable price-competition. When the oil controversy shook American manufacturers' confidence in Mexico and caused them to restrict credit, the Germans liberalized their credit policies. American manufacturers sent to Mexico as trade representatives men who knew no Spanish, and who, once in the country, lived in the closed circle of the American colony. Germans trained young men to speak Spanish, sent them to the country to live among the Mexicans, learn their cus-

toms, their psychology and politics. American manufacturers shipped to Mexico—and to other foreign markets, for that matter—the “surplus” of their manufactured products, expecting the acceptance found in the United States. Germany made a special study of Mexican wants and needs, their preferences in colors, packaging, ways of packing and shipping; they gave their products Spanish names and sought by every means to create a permanent demand for them. The result: their sales to Mexico went up, and ours went down.

When the second World War broke out, the Germans began a strenuous effort to hold the ground they had gained. At first, shipping was kept up through Italian ports; German goods also were consigned to Mexican consuls at North Sea ports, notably Rotterdam, to be brought to Mexico in Swedish ships. Some German shipping ran the blockade.

As the blockade became stricter, German efforts to deliver became desperate and they began shipping across Russia and Siberia to Japan, where merchandise was re-boxed and shipped by the Nippon Yusen Kaisha to Mexican ports. Most of this merchandise consisted of small articles that could be spread widely through the trade network, but the Germans did manage to deliver some farm materials, heavy chemicals and Diesel engines by this route as late as the fall of 1940. These last are materials of war to a nation in arms. Their delivery in Mexico had the double effect of giving the impression that German home production was high, which would be a factor favorable to their military success, and of keeping these products circulating through the trade channels that have been forced for them.

While the Havana conference was in progress, an intense drive to offset it was staged by German commercial agents in Mexico, who offered goods for delivery in October 1940 under

contracts containing a penalty clause. Letters offering German goods at prices as much as 28% under the nearest American price came directly from Germany, by air across France and Spain to Lisbon, by Atlantic Clipper to New York and the regular air-mail service to Mexico City. Some contracts for textile machinery were signed; the only known sources of supply of this machinery that Germany controls are certain factories in northern France. Thus Germany is already using the resources of conquered nations in its trade war.

As it became more and more difficult for Germany to deliver goods to Mexico, another device for holding its trade position was introduced. The German wholesalers and retailers who had built up trade connections throughout the nation began to seek agency for American products. This means of course, that when German goods are again available, they can easily switch back to the former, and cheaper, source of supply. They will have, furthermore, a complete inside knowledge of American products, prices, and methods, information very vital in trade competition.

Many of these representations were obtained openly and directly. I have a list of seventeen American manufacturing firms, the majority of them enormous concerns producing a wide variety of articles, that have since the summer of 1940 placed their agencies in Mexico in the hands of German distributors, and I know that there are many others. For firms who look a little further ahead than these, another scheme was worked out. German firms organized Mexican subsidiaries under Mexican names and solicited American representations. In one known instance such a subsidiary sent letters to more than fifty American manufacturers, some of whom wrote back to inquire the nationality of the directors. They were told that

all the firm-members and personnel were Mexican. In fact, all but a few minor employees were German-born nazi sympathizers and if Mexican, were so only by naturalization.

Germany has brought to the trade competition in Mexico all the methods of warfare. Commercial espionage is well organized; fifth-column methods have been employed. To my knowledge, an American employee of an important American organization in Mexico was stopped from giving newspaper people inside details on nazi trade activities . . . and he was stopped by his own organization. Investigation revealed that men of German blood and birth, naturalized citizens of other countries, were influential in this organization. These two facts may or may not be connected; at any rate, a patriotic American can no longer give out information that Americans need to know.

Mexico City is an international cross-roads, where influences from the East, from Central and South America, from Europe and from the United States meet and mingle. The city is full of foreigners and those you see in greatest number are the Germans and Americans. Germans and Americans are everywhere, in the streets, in the hotels, in the restaurants, in the night-clubs. But there is a difference. The thought and purpose of the great majority of the Americans you can read in their holiday air and their childlike tourist faces. Not so the Germans; when you see them in the street, when you hear them giving their orders, in Spanish always, in stores, hotels, restaurants—when you have them snatch taxis right out from under your hand at the rush hour, you know that the Germans are in Mexico in pursuit of serious affairs. There are a great many of them and they are purposeful and they are very busy.

I always like to hear both sides of a question and I sought an interview with one of the most powerful Germans in Mexico,

a man who holds important purse strings. I inquired how many Germans there were in the country; I was told six thousand. (Reliable American sources say nine or ten.) I asked about percentage of imports supplied by Germany, and his statistics were quite out of date; a negligible eight per cent was thought to be the amount. There were not many Germans in Mexico, was the impression given; they had little commercial influence, very little interest there, and so forth. After a quarter of an hour of this sort of hedging, the talk turned to the question of German preparation in languages. My German friend relaxed into a smile and finally a laugh, for the only time during our conversation, when he told me that he knew a good many Americans who had lived in Mexico for twenty years without learning Spanish. I must admit my answering smile was a little sickly.

Before I left I could not resist asking if the Germans really owned the Sarabia Airlines. This was, of course, the first time such a rumor had shocked his ears. It was vigorously discounted; the rumor was attributed to the fact that there are Germans employed as pilots.

Night-life in Mexico City is very gay and in many of the smaller night-clubs there prevails an easy air of informality that is charming when you are in a bohemian mood; on such an occasion, if your party knows Spanish and is not stand-offish, you are likely to meet almost anybody: cabinet ministers, actresses, academicians, international crooks, bullfighters, doctors, lawyers, merchants, or one of Diego Rivera's several ex-wives. Through these clubs and bars, where the consumption of alcohol reaches truly notable proportions, runs the underground gossip and inside information of three continents. Newspaper men in Mexico know that from the well-tipped

waiter in these spots comes the bit of information that gives a lead to the big story that it may or may not be possible to print but that they cannot afford not to know.

American newspaper men work these places like a beat. Germans work in them.

It has been a hobby of mine to watch where Germans find employment in Mexico's capital and it is obvious that they are covering the city with a thoroughness and an eye for detail that shows a firm intention to know what goes on. One coincidence that may have no significance whatever is that there are places of business either owned or partially staffed by Germans facing the entrance of (a) the American Embassy in Mexico City, (b) the American Consulate and (c) the Ambassador's Residence, each of which gives on a different street.

The German propaganda machine in Mexico is highly organized and functions with tireless efficiency and thoroughness. Day after day, week after week, month after month, they have been pounding away, taking advantage of every happening, of every event, of every political and financial situation, to drive home a few basic ideas. These ideas are founded on a thorough knowledge of Mexico's history and its internal politics. These German propaganda organs—and they are numerous and well distributed—emphasize first, Germany's innocent record in Latin America; Germany's might and the certainty of its victory in the present war; the decadence of England; English sins of imperialism; American sins of imperialism, our past mutilation of Mexico and our fell designs on Mexico and all that it has.

Sabotage is attempted against every step that the United States makes toward closer hemispheric coöperation. While the Havana conference was in session, the "iron claw," the "Yan-

kee menace" was waved in the face of all Mexico. At any talk of military coöperation or our using Mexican ports for naval bases, "occupation" of Mexico appears; the "Yankee invasion" is only one step away.

Here is the message of a poster that was plastered all over Mexico one night:

"¡MEXICANS!

"Glory and honor to the patriotic and powerful German army which in these moments is demonstrating to the world what talent, what technical organization and what well-directed efforts it is using to obtain the supreme objective of bettering conditions of life for the world of the future . . . !!!

"We deplore the conduct of some American governments who, under command of their boss, are trying to protest the noble and patriotic attitude of the German people in punishing severely a country that has always been in favor of domination of the world by illicit means, as England has, a country that lives at the expense of three-fourths of the world, which it has dominated, exploiting them and not permitting them to prosper. Furthermore, these American protests are only attempting to maintain an archaic doctrine called the Monroe Doctrine, which no one has asked for and no one needs and which is a shame against the liberty of these American peoples. It is as if they kissed the whip that falls on the shoulders of the weak peoples of the continent.

"England has grabbed the Malvinas Islands . . . the property of Argentine; it has grabbed Belize, formerly the property of Mexico and now justly claimed by Guatemala. It has taken possession of the Island of Trinidad . . . It took part in the 'pastry war,' waiting to intervene in Mexico . . . Now it claims Mexican petroleum, which is ours, entirely ours, using an unfair diplomatic maneuver, apparently letting the United States appear to claim it; but at the bottom one finds the hand of this nation plotting against the Mexican people . . . It is just that England should now receive a well-merited punishment . . . On the other hand, Mexico, and with it all of America, has not

received any offense or mutilation at the hands of the Great German People, this most powerful nation which today has won all humankind, by whom its true bravery is admired. Why be against this patriotic, intelligent, hardworking and virtuous nation, only to please Uncle Sam? Especially when the Mexicans can thank that government for the mutilation of losing a little more than half its territory, Texas, Colorado, Arizona, California and the Chamizal . . .

"American nations without the shameful tutelage of the so-called Monroe Doctrine would be great and strong, within a safe, sound and well-intentioned relation among our Latin race . . .

"¡¡LONG LIVE MEXICO GREAT AND POWERFUL WITH ITS STATES OF TEXAS, CALIFORNIA, ARIZONA, COLORADO AND THE CHAMIZAL!!

"¡¡LONG LIVE THE GERMAN PEOPLE AND WELCOME BE THE ITALIAN PEOPLE!!"

The *Diario de la Guerra*, cried on the streets of Mexico as *el diario Alemán*, the German daily, by the majority of the newsboys who distribute the two afternoon papers, plays constantly on the idea of Germany's great destruction to England and to English naval power. Says a typical headline:

ENGLAND HAS LOST MORE THAN SEVEN
MILLION NAVAL TONS UP TILL NOW

"ANOTHER 3 MILLION IN SHIPPING HAS PROBABLY BEEN LOST."
Said another headline in the same issue:

"THE ITALIANS ONLY
CHASED THE ENGLISH 50
KILOMETERS IN LIBYA"

Day after day, week after week, goes the record of the destruction of the British Empire. I think this type of propaganda

is having a counter-effect in Mexico; after reading for months about this terrible punishment, the Mexicans are very naturally beginning to get a very high opinion of the bravery and resistance of the English. The Italians have been mentioned less and less since their spectacular advance backwards in Greece and Albania.

La Semana, a pro-German publication, traded very cleverly on *almazanista* sentiment. This is the way a typical front page ran:

"German Air Force Continues to Pound England to Pieces
TREMENDOUS REPRISALS AGAINST THE ALMAZANISTAS
Outstanding Almazanista Chiefs Leave for the United States."

Below appeared a picture of Hitler, Mussolini and Petain with a sub-title written in Spanish but printed in a gothic type, leading to the assumption that it was prepared in mat form in Germany.

A lead story of this same issue says:

"YANKEE IMPERIALISTS WANT TO DISMEMBER
MEXICO UNDER PRETEXT OF DEFENDING THE
CONTINENT.

"THEY ARE TRYING TO PUT INTO EXECUTION THE PROJECT OF
OPENING A CANAL IN TEHUANTEPEC.

"Again threatened by a war to the death, the United States wants to violate once more the sovereignty of Mexico, renewing the old project of opening a canal across the Tehuantepec Isthmus or of improving the railroad line that connects the Gulf with the Pacific across the Isthmus . . .

"Against the infamous project of dividing the national territory into two parts or of rebuilding the railroad that now exists with American money so that it can be used by the government of the White House at its pleasure, all the vital forces of the nation should rise in opposition, so that the North Americans

may not realize this long-desired dream of taking over, as they did in Panama, strips of other people's territory for their mean purposes . . .

"Not with one inch of soil nor with a single one of her sons should Mexico aid the Yankees, who have submitted our country to the blackest humiliations."

Week after week, Mexicans are fed this fare. There are half a dozen other publications, among them *Omega* and *Hombre Libre*, that take a lick at the United States when they can.

The Germans send mimeographed bulletins to the majority of the newspaper offices in Mexico every day. Not only that, but a German bulletin goes to a great many of the ranking officers of the Mexican army every day; every morning on their desks they find a specially prepared dish of propaganda, and, as a high army officer friendly to the United States remarked to me, the constant repetition is bound to have some effect.

Here is an example of the propaganda the army receives. (It has sweet reasonableness entirely lacking in the propaganda put out for the uneducated):

"War Bulletin—Number 370

"German Political Release

"England Suffers from Lack of Imagination.

"If at some future date, there is an investigation of the factors that have contributed to the decadence of England, the conclusion will have to be drawn that lack of information led the British Government to make bad decisions. Contrary to other nations, the English imagination is limited. . . . England's system of information and the precision with which it functioned gave England a great advantage during many centuries which was incorrectly interpreted by contemporaries as a great gift of improvisation."

Then it goes on to say how the breakdown of the British system of information led it to believe that Germany could

never make a pact with Russia and preserve its friendly relations with Italy, Japan and Spain. There are also in this bulletin a résumé of the economic situation of South Africa, painting it very black, and reports of raids over England, "reprisals" that caused great damage. There is a radio program telling when broadcasts from Germany may be heard.

A great many of the Mexican officers probably flip these bulletins into the wastebasket; others undoubtedly read them and some of the information probably sticks in their minds as facts.

Germans in Mexico are leaving no field unworked. Out of Mexico City, into the rural sections go young men, commercial travelers ostensibly, carrying suitcases and trunks. These are filled with books that tell a propaganda story in pictures, to be distributed among Mexico's many illiterate. The subject of one of these publications, prepared and printed in Berlin, was Polish atrocities against Germans.

Out of Mexico City into the hinterlands of Mexico also go young men carrying movie projection machines and rolls of films. In remote villages, where many have never seen a movie, these young Germans show their films and explain them. Here again Polish atrocities against Germans are pictured. The Germans are already, long before the end of this war is in sight, taking elaborate pains to inculcate into the minds of Mexico's ignorant and uninstructed a clear and graphic idea that would exonerate the "great and good" German nation of any war guilt.

The Nazi Party in Mexico has 3,800 members and includes the great majority of the adult males of the German colony there. While most of its direction comes out of the German Embassy, the chief meeting place of the higher officers is at No. 80, Calle de Uruguay, in the heart of down-town Mexico

City. The nazis have a storm troop of 250 organizers and propaganda specialists, who have been instrumental in forming the *Partido Nacionalista Socialista Mexicana*, and in private they boast that this organization has 100,000 members among Mexicans of the laboring and the humbler classes. The PNSM is an affiliate of the *Liga Latina-Americana Pro-Defensa Continental*, the federation of Nazi-organized parties among Latin-American nations.

Nazi storm troopers in Mexico give lectures to the members of the PNSM at small but frequently-held meetings. They present the German version of modern history, discuss world politics, the imperialistic sins of England and our own; they discuss Germany's foreign relations and their world-plan. They tell how the United States is shot through and through with German agents and fifth columnists. These nazis also conduct sabotage classes, teaching Mexicans the most efficient methods.

The masterpiece of all German propaganda, a secret that the nazis have sought to guard from all but Mexicans, is Hitler's "mystery weapon." This is a propaganda device worthy of an Oppenheim novel—or a comic strip. It is a "disintegrator gun," a weapon that melts iron, cuts through steel, is irresistible.

There are actually in Mexico today more than a hundred of these "weapons"; they are exhibited to labor and demonstrated. Demonstrations have been held in Torreón, Pachuca, Monterrey and other cities of northern Mexico.

This "gun" looks rather like a flashlight camera such as press photographers use. A magazine containing a battery straps to the body; on the face of this magazine are current regulator and control. The disintegrator proper is connected to the battery by a flexible wire cable. It has a handle at the back, by which it is held; a "ray" shoots out through a lens in the front

of the box. An upright from the box supports another lens through which another "ray" is sent, at an angle that causes it to converge, at an adjustable distance, with the path of the lower ray. The crossing of these two rays produces the magic disintegrating effect.

Pairs of Germans, trained slight-of-hand artists with appropriate stage props, one assumes, give guarded exhibitions, breaking steel bars like wax with this Buck Rogers outfit.

This gun has not been needed in the European conflict, they say. They are saving it for us.

The *Liga Latina-Americana Pro-Defensa Continental* and the members of the PNSM are being taught a "military plan" by German propagandists. Germany will "force" the United States to declare war. (A date for this was at one time set: December 18th, 1940.) Then the PNSM and other affiliates of the *Liga* are to rise up and kill all citizens of the United States who can be found in Latin America. The United States will then send punitive expeditions, say the Germans; these will be polished off (perhaps with the "mystery gun") and our country, thus harassed, will be weakened for the kill.

It is fantastic enough to stagger the imagination . . . yet for the ignorant and uninformed, it has the appeal of the adventure cartoons and the exploits of the Superman. If in one Latin-American country, the Germans, with their "mystery gun," the "military plan" and their very plentiful gold, could provoke an incident along the lines of the stoning of the American Embassy when Vice-President Wallace arrived in Mexico City but serious enough to bring forth reprisals from our government, the effect it would have in Latin America would make all the nazi prestidigitations and painstaking propagandizing well-worth their while. Their game would be won.

Whenever you begin investigating the activities of the Germans in Mexico, you cross the trail of the Japanese. It is very curious. A suspicious mind would think that they are working in close coöperation there.

For example, during the latter months of 1939, when the British blockade began to cut down German deliveries in Mexico and all of Germany's desperate efforts to keep the goods of other nations out of its trade channels were failing, the Japanese started an intense trade drive in Mexico among Germany's customers. I have seen quotations of prices by Japanese firms that were as much as 50% under the nearest American price. Japanese goods are of notoriously bad quality and they are not popular in Mexico, but such a terrific price competition was bound to have its effect and a great many orders were taken. Delivery has been slow; many of the goods did not begin arriving till the summer of 1940, but in the meantime, other nations, in particular our own, were held out of the market by that much.

Japan has increased its sales in Mexico in the last year or so from one per cent of the total to two per cent and over. This is not a large amount of the whole; it represents, however, a hundred per cent increase in Japan's part of the market. At the present time, Japan simply does not have the productive capacity to make a drive for the Mexican market as it would like to and Japanese commercial propaganda in Mexico centers around the idea that Japan is the *coming* market and customer for Mexico.

The Japanese have instilled this into the minds of Mexican and other importers in Mexico to the extent that even in the face of statistics showing that Germany's trade penetration has been far greater and more effective than Japan's, it is Japan

whom the American importers fear. It must be something like a commercial nightmare to see growing the threat of a competition already started at fifty per cent under the best price they can make.

One of the chief means by which this idea of a future close and profitable commercial relation between Japan and Mexico is being fomented is a series of visiting commercial missions. During the past few years, numerous groups of Japanese, representatives of the government, of business and of industrial interests, have appeared in Mexico, to study the situation. These commissions go all over the country studying various phases of Mexico's commercial, industrial and agricultural affairs, with the view to keying Mexico's commerce in with the Japanese. During the fall of 1940 such a party came to a Mexican Hotel, *The Regis*, well-known as a center for politicians; they stayed so long and spent so much money entertaining and sending wires and cables to South America, to Japan, to Europe, even to the United States, it gave rise to the story that the leader was a very high Japanese official traveling incognito. In Mexico City he became known as the Prince.

This commercial information has no doubt served Japan well since the outbreak of the war. Japan needs oil and oil products, soda, salt, copper and zinc; these, as well as scrap iron, mercury, tungsten, mica, vanadium and other strategic materials, are available in Mexico. In 1938, according to government figures, Japan's purchases from Mexico were valued at 3,590,976 pesos. In 1939 they leapt to 9,393,887 and from January to September of 1940 totaled 13,250,928 pesos. It is known that part of these supplies have been shipped across Russia to Germany.

Not only do the Japanese send commissions to Mexico, they

take Mexican commissions to their country. A group of officers of the Mexican National Chamber of Commerce were the guests of the government for an extended tour of Japan during the summer of 1940. Japanese posters now hang in the offices of this organization and everyone naturally feels very friendly towards Japan.

I have been told by a Mexican who went on this trip that no definite business propositions were made to them by the Japanese. They were simply taken to Japan, treated royally, shown all the advancements the country has made; Japanese friendship for Mexico was impressed on them and, along with it, of course, the idea that when Japan completes its program of expansion, there will begin an era of commercial exchange that will be very profitable to the Mexicans. It is significant that the men whom they invite on these junkets are young, men now on the way up, who will be influential in Mexico's national affairs tomorrow.

The Mexican Pacific coast's strategic position in the Western Hemisphere has been as obvious to the Japanese as to American naval and military authorities. During the past generation, we have made several unsuccessful attempts to gain permission to use Magdalena Bay, in Lower California, as a coaling station for our fleet; in the meanwhile the Japanese have been settling all along this coast from the American border to Guatemala. The Japanese government has encouraged this colonization. Many Japanese who have come to Mexico not only have had their passage paid and have been provided with a financial stake to start on, but they have the assistance of their government in fulfilling the requirements necessary to establishing Mexican citizenship. Large numbers of Japanese in Mexico are Mexican citizens, married to Indian women.

Their fishing industry on the West Coast has been so profitable that they have been able to buy from the British government a number of old coast-guard patrol boats, 300-ton craft equipped with radios and mountings where small guns can be placed. If it were desirable to combine fishing with the sounding of these waters for maps and charts, the Japanese would have an ideal setup. It has been observed that on several occasions when men have fallen overboard from Japanese ships docked in West Coast harbors, expert divers have appeared from among the ships' crews, to dive into the waters of the harbor day after day, searching, unsuccessfully of course, for the body of the lost comrade.

An accurate knowledge of the harbors of West Coast ports will enable the Japanese to keep up with their development as they are converted into naval bases under Mexico's new national defense plans. Knowledge of the wild stretches between ports would be very valuable if they should ever want to attempt refueling sea raiders for a blow at the Panama Canal.

Japanese colonies exist in Mexico at a number of strategic points. There are Japanese truck-farmers in northwestern Mexico, not far below the American border. These men own properties that are smooth and level; it would be no difficulty to convert them into landing fields for light craft. There are Japanese settled in Oaxaca, a state where strategic minerals are mined. They have salt concessions in La Paz, in Lower California. Their other business ventures include a number of photo supply and developing concerns; the Japanese passion for photography is well known. A Japanese firm owns oil concessions in the Tehuantepec region and near Vera Cruz.

Some of Japan's business dealings in Mexico have been very involved. In the first place, there has been a persistent rumor

that a high official in the Cárdenas government was interested in the *Compañía Petrolera Veracruzana*, Mexican subsidiary of *La Laguna*, subsidiary of Taiheiyo Sakiyo Kaisha of Kobe, which is in turn owned by the Mitsui interests. People have been so unkind as to say that out of this combination, private Mexican and Japanese fortunes in Mexico City have prospered. Now, in the second place, the oil concessions owned by *Petrolera Veracruzana* in the state of Vera Cruz and in the Tehuantepec Isthmus are not very productive. Wells in the Isthmus produce only about twenty-five barrels a day, but if the valve is closed for several days, upon opening them, there is produced for ten or fifteen minutes a spurt of oil that looks like a gusher. When representatives of the Mitsui interests visited Mexico not so very long ago, they were taken to the fields there and treated to several of these displays. In the confusion, they may have received the impression that they saw real gushers . . . who knows? At any rate, oil men in Mexico City report that a three-million-yen appropriation for further development of these fields soon came into the hands of Japanese in Mexico.

Since that time, the situation has become even more tangled. *La Laguna*, which has held a concession as importer of Japanese cellulose under an agreement signed by Modesto C. Rolland, Cárdenas' Sub-secretary of Economy, has been publicly charged by the artificial silk manufacturers of Mexico with operating a monopoly and with pricing the Japanese product at three hundred pesos a ton above what it should cost. Señor Rolland's department was that which controlled the granting of oil-drilling leases; during the last year or so *Petrolera Veracruzana* has received as many as fifteen, far more than any other company.

Not long after this came out, an inquisitive American news-

paper correspondent, O'Brine of the *New York Herald Tribune*, turned up a story that rocked both Washington and Mexico City. It was that *Petrolera Veracruzana* had received from the Cárdenas government the "most liberal concession granted in the last twenty years—a long-term optional lease on 250,000 acres of possible oil lands in the State of Vera Cruz." Soon after came news that thousands of tons of scrap iron, garnered from expropriated American and English oil properties one assumes, had been sold to Japan by *Petróleos de Mexico*, the Mexican government's operating company that controls the oil industry.

Reports were immediately given out in Mexico City that the oil concession would be cancelled; that shipment of the scrap iron and of quantities of barreled oil and mercury to Japan would be stopped. The facts of the case are these: The scrap iron, oil and mercury went on their way; the government embargo was "temporarily abrogated." A condition requiring a money deposit was attached to the oil concession, but *Petrolera Veracruzana* promptly took to the law to get an injunction against this action, and there the matter rests. The concession has not been canceled.

The Japanese also have a "military plan" that their propagandists are spreading among the Mexicans, one of a thrilling and beautiful simplicity. Our Pacific fleet is to be bottled up in West Coast bases by the explosion of strategically-placed mines. At the same time, the Japanese are to establish a base in Central America or Mexico; Mexico is to rise and (with the Japanese pushing from behind, it appears) attack us. Mexico, as reward for thus doing Japan's dirty work, is to get the usual reward: "Texas, California, Arizona, Colorado and the Chamizal."

If it were not enough for the Germans and the Japanese to be

bringing all possible pressure to bear in Mexico, there is also developing a serious double-barreled attack from Spanish sources.

The falangistas, by word-of-mouth propaganda, through organization in the Spanish colony and through subsidized publications, notably *Boletín de Unidad*, are appealing to the middle and upper classes for a closer union, based on ties of race and culture, between Spain and her "daughters" in the New World.

The communists are hammering heavily among the laboring classes with propaganda against "the imperialist war." This means, no doubt, that the unusual concentration of Spanish communist leaders that has been noted in Mexico during recent months will result in a formidable campaign against Mexican military preparedness and participation in hemispheric defense.

The English have lately, within the past few months, taken steps to combat this propaganda in Mexico; so far, we of the United States have done nothing to offset it. In the Mexican press there are no spokesmen for our interests; German propaganda ideas, no matter how far-fetched and weird, go unchallenged before the Mexican public. We have in fact no organized system of information to keep in touch with what the Germans are doing and what they plan to do. An American friend of mine, in discussing this situation, made a very searching observation in pointing out the danger of our government's policy of being harmless as the dove in Mexico unless at the same time it has a system of information-gathering that permits it to be as wise as the serpent.

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